14. Canary Island Date Palm (Phoenix canariensis)

Though native to the Canary Islands, this species was originally brought to California in the 18th Century and can still be found near the California mission and old farmsteads. The fruit is not edible but the high crown can be home to rodents, birds, insects, and other plants.

15. Douglas Fir (Pseudotsuga menziesii)

Douglas fir is the principal lumber tree in the United States and is found in the Santa Cruz Mountains as well as much of western North America. It is easy to recognize: the cones hang from the tree pointing downward. The needles, 1–1½” long, stick out from all sides of the branch.

16. Western Sycamore (Platanus racemosa)

This is a California native that grows along streams and in canyons up to elevations of 4,000’. It can grow to a height over 100’ with a trunk diameter over 36”. Many small birds feed on its fruit and several mammals eat the twigs and bark.

17. Chinese Elm (Ulmus parvifolia)

They grow rapidly to 40–60’ with an equal or greater spread. Chinese Elms vary in shape, but usually appear spreading with long weeping branches that reach down to the ground if not pruned. The tree’s interesting bark is “exfoliating,” which means that small patches of the bark regularly peel off as a mechanism for the tree to eliminate toxins from air pollution leaving the trunk looking like a jigsaw puzzle missing pieces.

18. Chaste Tree (Vitex agnus-castus)

Usually a large shrub, this exceptionally large specimen has been trained as a tree. Native to the Mediterranean, chaste tree is very tolerant of drought and shade and is relatively pest free. The common name “Monk’s Pepper” refers to the medieval belief that using potions made from the berries helped monks maintain their vows of chastity.

19. European Smoketree (Cotinus coggygria)

A small tree that gets its name from the dramatic puffs of “smoke” from fading flowers. These puffs are stalks of long, fuzzy lavender-pink hairs. There are many cultivars with different leaf colors available.

20. Coast Redwood var. Aptos Blue (Sequoia Sempervirens ‘Aptos Blue’)

Another California native, this redwood cultivar has deep blue-green needles and branches that are more horizontal than other redwoods. It can be grown as a hedge for a tall screen, but it does require a lot of water.

21. Tulip Tree (Liriodendron tulipifera)

This is the tallest growing broadleaf tree native to North America. The distinctive leaves turn a butter-yellow color before dropping in the fall. Light green tulip-shaped flowers that bloom in the summer are hidden high in older trees. Tulip trees often drop sticky sap due to aphid infestations common in our climate zone. These trees are healthier with regular irrigation.

22. Red Oak [may be ‘Shumardii’] (Quercus rubra)

A native of Northeastern United States, it’s a deciduous tree but in mild winter climates like the Midpeninsula, it holds onto its dead leaves well into winter. People often assume it’s a dead tree, but its not. This tree prefers deep monthly soakings.

23. Common Persimmon (Diospyros virginiana)

A rare sight in the Bay Area, where we typically see its cousin, Diospyros kaki, the common persimmon grows wild in the eastern U.S. It has been cultivated for thousands of years. It grows up to 60 ft.

24. Southern Live Oak (Quercus virginiana)

An East Coast native, this tree typically has a strong structure. It is considered fast-growing, then slows as it reaches 40’ high and with a canopy equally as wide. Southern live oaks are a good source of food from its acorns and shelter for wildlife.

“Trees are as close to immortality as the rest of us ever come.”

~ Karen Joy Fowler

Author
The Cuesta Park Tree Walk begins at the corner of the parking lot on Cuesta Drive.

1. **Italian Stone Pine** (*Pinus pinea*)

   Originally from the Northern Mediterranean, Italian stone pines have been cultivated for their edible seeds for thousands of years. Pine nuts (pignolis in Italian) are a great source of protein, thiamin, phosphorous, and iron. This tree can easily grow to 70' height and 70' spread in 70 years.

2. **Monterey Pine** (*Pinus radiata*)

   The natural range of Monterey pines is restricted to three isolated stands near the California coast (Cambria, the Monterey Peninsula, and north of Santa Cruz) but it is now the most widely planted pine in the world. Growth is rapid and it has become an important timber tree. This tree is extremely susceptible to pine pitch canker, a fungal disease, and bark beetles when stressed by drought.

3. **Sweet Bay** (*Laurus nobilis*)

   Another Mediterranean native that grows well in our climate. The leaves are legendary as a culinary seasoning. In Ancient Greece they were a symbol of victory, honor, and heroes and branches were worn as crowns. This tree can be very resilient and practically pest-free, especially the cultivar ‘Saratoga.’ Expect slow growth, eventually reaching 20’ to 40’ tall.

4. **Red Maple** (*Acer rubrum*)

   Native to Northeastern United States, regular irrigation is necessary to provide spectacular red fall color. Three common cultivars of red maple are ‘October Glory’ ‘Autumn Blaze’ and ‘Red Sunset.’

5. **Jacaranda** (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*)

   The fern-like leaves are deciduous and drop in March and April. It then blooms a brilliant bright purple from June to September and can be seen in abundance lining the streets of Santa Barbara (it’s worth a trip). Jacarandas can be sensitive to frost.

6. **Afrocarpus** (*Afrocarpus falcatus*)

   Often pruned into a hedge, the Podocarpus or fern pine (neither a fern, nor a pine!) is a large coniferous tree native to South Africa. Although usually found smaller, it has been reported to reach also 200’ tall. In South Africa, this wood is mostly used to make furniture.

7. **Bigleaf Maple** (*Acer macrophyllum*)

   A California native found near moist stream beds, this specimen thrives in an irrigated landscape, but can also grow in a low-irrigation area. The current national champion bigleaf maple is located in Lane County, Oregon. It has a circumference of 39’ and is 119’ high.

8. **Coast Live Oak** (*Quercus agrifolia*)

   The coast live oak is an evergreen native throughout much of California and grows relatively quickly to 70’ with an equal canopy spread. Once established, they tolerate drought very well; summer watering should be avoided, especially on the root flare.

9. **Eastern Redbud “Forest Pansy”** (*Cercis canadensis*)

   This Eastern United States native can be temperamental, but the reward is stunning. In spring, the redbud flowers emerge directly from the woody part of the trunk and larger branches. This is called cauliflory and is found mostly in tropical trees. There are few notable pests or problems.

10. **California Pepper** (*Schinus molle*)

    Originally native to Peru, this tree has been in California since the early 1800s and has now naturalized in many parts of the state. In traditional medicine, *Schinus molle* was used in treating wounds and infections for its antiseptic properties. The spicy fruit or peppercorns are toxic to humans if consumed in large quantities.

11. **Bur Oak** (*Quercus macrocarpa*)

    Native to the East Coast, with large ruffled leaves, and as the scientific name suggests, acorns that are very large, up to 2’ long. It’s an important food source for wildlife. The tree tends to grow in the open, much like our valley oak.

12. **Saucer Magnolia** (*Magnolia X soulangeana*)

    A deciduous magnolia with white to purplish-red fragrant flowers, 3–6” wide. This tree blooms from late winter into spring before the leaves emerge. This hybrid was created near Paris in the 1820s when two Asian species were crossed.

13. **Incense Cedar** (*Calocedrus decurrens*)

    Get close to this tree and you’ll know why it’s commonly referred to as the incense cedar. It’s also the wood that surrounds a #2 lead pencil. They are native to California and have thick bark for protection from forest fires.