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CANOPY

TREES FOR PALO ALTO

Canopy is a non-profit advocate for Palo Alto's community trees and works to educate, inspire and engage Palo Altans as stewards of new and existing trees.

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Trees As Food by Ann Bilodeau

When we think about trees as a source of food, we think first of the fruit trees many of us plant in our Palo Alto gardens—apples and apricots, plums and pears, oranges and lemons, figs and persimmons. Some of us harvest almonds and walnuts if we can get them before the squirrels do.

But other trees that thrive in our climate can be sources of food or medicine, even though they require more work. Although we're unlikely to start soaking and grinding acorns from native oaks as a source of flour, it is fun to learn about how trees can provide more than shade and beauty. Check these intriguing examples.

The *Arbutus marina* (a nice specimen was available for sale after Canopy's most recent Tree Talk) is a tree with peeling bark and sprays of white-pink flowers; clusters of yellow fruit ripen to a deep red. These edible fruits hang on the tree outside my kitchen window like ornaments, and upon learning they were edible I tried one out. I was

disappointed by the blandness and was not even tempted to turn them into jelly, so I was surprised to learn they are used in liqueurs in France.

Sunset recommends the fruitless mulberry for home gardens; this is the variety used to feed silkworms. If you want to compete with birds for mulberry fruit, the *Morus nigra* has a semi-dwarf form that grows to 15', according to Sunset. The fruit resembles blackberries and can be used in all the same ways.

Another beautiful tree with edible fruit is the brush cherry, or *Syzygium paniculatum*, formerly classified as a *Eugenia*. (The true *Eugenia* has fruit the size of small tomatoes, but needs a warmer climate.) New growth is bronze, and the plant is often pruned as a hedge. The tree form is handsome and narrow, single or multi-trunked, with a dense crown of foliage. I've seen recipes for the fruit, although it is described in one book as insipid, and the fruit can be messy if it drops on a patio.

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Eugenia Jelly

4 pounds ripe fruit
1 package powdered pectin
1 cup water
4 1/2 cups sugar
1 cup lemon juice

Wash and crush fruit. Add water and 1/2 cup lemon juice. Cover and simmer for 15 minutes. Strain through a jelly bag or washed cheesecloth. You need 3 cups of juice. Add 1/2 cup lemon juice and pectin. Stir well. Bring to a boil and add sugar, stirring constantly at a rolling boil. Boil exactly 2 minutes. Skim. Pour into sterilized jars and seal.

For sauce: To one cup of juice, add sugar and lemon juice to taste. Stir in 1 Tbsp cornstarch dissolved in a little water. Simmer and stir until clear.

Bay Laurel leaves are stronger than the traditional European bay leaf used in cooking, although they are now also packaged commercially. If you have an *Umbellularia californica* in your garden, you can pick the leaves and dry them to use sparingly in stews and other dishes.

Some people have planted a Carob tree as an ornamental because of the long dark-red pods that hang on the tree in

the late fall and winter. You can harvest the seeds by picking the pods before they harden. Recipes call for paring off the stem end and grinding the entire pod in a blender with some water, then simmering for ten minutes and straining. Spread the meal on a cookie sheet and set it in a warm oven. Once this coarse meal is dry, grind it again to a fine powder.

Carob Cocoa

To the carob powder, add one part sugar to four parts carob. You can use this sweetened carob powder as a substitute for cocoa.

Carob-Honey Brownies

1/3 cup butter or margarine
3/4 cup carob meal
3/4 cup honey
2 eggs, beaten
3/4 cup flour
1 tsp vanilla
1/2 tsp baking powder
1/2 cup chopped nuts
1/4 tsp salt (optional)

Preheat oven to 350. Melt butter. Mix in honey and carob meal. Beat in eggs and remaining ingredients until smooth. Bake in greased 8x8 inch pan for 35 minutes.

Although subject to aphids and fire-blight, the hawthorn or *Crataegus* has pretty spring

flowers and showy fruit and attracts bees and birds. You can find many different species to suit your landscape; some carry fruit that is delicious when raw and require very little sugar when turned into jelly. You can also steep the fruit in water to make a tea and flavor it with mint.

Willows also come in many species suitable for our area, although they can be difficult to incorporate into a garden because of their invasive roots. In the case of the willow, it's not the fruit that is edible but the young leaves, which are a good source of vitamin C, and the inner bark, which is a natural form of aspirin.

That's it for now. Be sure to watch for more "Trees as Food" recipes from Ann in coming issues of this newsletter.

Sources (all available at the Palo Alto Main Library):

Angier, Bradford: *Feasting Free on Wild Edibles* (Stackpole Books, 1972).

Clarke, Charlotte Bringle: *Edible and Useful Plants of California* (University of California Press, 1977).

Silverman, Maida: *A City Herbal* (Knopf, 1977).

Sunset Western Garden Book (Sunset Publishing, 1995). ■

Know Your Street Trees

Eastern Redbud, *Cercis Canadensis*, is one of five redbuds grown in the West. It is the largest and fastest growing, reaching 35' at maturity. The rich green 3-6" long leaves are heart-shaped with pointed tips. Small (1/2" long) rosy pink flowers



clothe the bare brown branches in early spring. Flowers are followed by clusters of flat seed pods. Gives fall color at the first frost. An attractive understory tree. ■

Special Thank You

Three of our local businesses, **Dalton Realty**, **Davey Tree Service**, and **Safe & Beautiful Trees by Care of Trees** have given generously to Canopy. Without their generosity and that of organizations like them, Canopy would have to dramatically reduce its services to the community. If you have the opportunity, please tell these businesses how much you appreciate their support of Canopy. ■

Canopy's Wish List

Listed below are items Canopy could use in our office. If you have any of these things and would like to donate them to Canopy, please contact the office at 650-964-6110 or by email at info@canopy.org. Many thanks! All of these are computer items which need to be Macintosh compatible.

- USB scanner and software
- Quark Xpress 5 graphic design software
- Laser printer
- Digital camera (preferably high-resolution) and accompanying software

Keep in mind that all gifts to Canopy including gifts-in-kind like those on our wish list are tax deductible.

Escondido Elementary Gets New Trees!



Father-daughter team Glenn and Carolyn Rennels carry a tree to the planting site at Escondido. Volunteers planted 6 fruitless mulberries, 1 cedar, 1 apricot and 1 plum. Hats off to Canopy program committee volunteer Kevin Raftery for putting together this great project!

Trees for El Camino Project Moving Forward *by Susan Rosenberg*

Something wonderful is finally happening on El Camino Real. The vision of the Trees for El Camino Project—to transform El Camino into a welcoming, tree-lined boulevard from Menlo Park to Mountain View—is at long last becoming a reality.

The dream of converting El Camino Real to a beautiful tree-lined boulevard has been kicking around Palo Alto for over 25 years.

The Trees for El Camino Project will result in trees with broad canopies in both the sidewalks and medians of the boulevard. Although they will provide beauty to what has been a notoriously dismal street, this is much more than a

simple beautification effort. The trees will also clean the air and cool nearby buildings, provide shade from the sun, and slow storm water run-off.

Note that this tree planting project is not about narrowing or removing any lanes of traffic on El Camino. It is part of an overall effort on the part of the City of Palo Alto to find ways to make El Camino Real function better as a city street for drivers, bike riders, and pedestrians. Moreover, the Project will go forward regardless of what happens with the other issues surrounding El Camino.

As of this writing, many of the elements necessary to realize the Project's vision are now in place. One is last December's decision by Caltrans, which has jurisdiction over El Camino Real, to establish a pilot project for Palo Alto, Menlo Park, and Redwood City, allowing for the planting of large shade trees in medians as narrow as 8' wide. Previously, Caltrans guidelines called for medians at least 12' wide.

In addition to Caltrans' changed guidelines, the City of Palo Alto has budgeted \$1.5 million to replace infrastructure (irrigation and soil) in the medians. Planting plans are being prepared by the City's landscape architect, with planting scheduled to begin in the fall of this year. A variety of trees will be planted, including Valley oak, Cork oak, London plane tree, Red maple, and American elm. Redwoods will be planted at the city's gateways.

As another element, Stanford University, which has El Camino Real frontage from Stanford Shopping Center to the Creekside Hotel, has recently planted close to a hundred trees on its property adjacent to El Camino. A further plus—the University's future plans are slated to include trees consistent with the goals of

the Trees for El Camino Project.

The idea to plant more trees along El Camino Real has been kicking around Palo Alto for over twenty-five years. The Trees for El Camino Project got its start in January of 1999 when a handful of Palo Alto residents felt that the time was ripe to tackle El Camino Real and started talking to the City Council (3 councils ago), city staff, Chamber of Commerce, Canopy, neighborhood groups, developers, and Stanford. The vision of the Project was unanimously endorsed.

Median minimums made matters marginal.

There was one major obstacle to the Project, however—Caltrans, which has jurisdiction over the entire length of El Camino. The vision of the Project called for trees large enough to eventually shade the street, but Caltrans guidelines allowed trees of that size only in medians 12' and wider. In Palo Alto this is only roughly 30 percent of the medians. Thus these guidelines, which Caltrans refused to alter, effectively kept Palo Alto from transforming El Camino into something the community has long wanted.

Continues next page

Simitian
spoke and
Caltrans
blinked.

The Project reached a stalemate, but Caltrans offered to “go

back to the drawing board to study the issue.” At that point, Assemblyman Joe Simitian remarked (referring to WWII) that “the United States fought and won a war on foreign soil in less time that it takes Caltrans to approve a tree planting.” Thanks to Simitian, Caltrans finally blinked and established its pilot.

There is one final element needed to make our vision a reality—your support. The vision of the Trees for El Camino Project will come to complete fruition only through the generosity of Palo Alto residents and businesses. To learn what El Camino will look like when the Trees for El Camino Project is complete (through computer-enhanced before and after images), and how you can make a difference, visit the website www.treesforelcamino.org or call 324-8733. ■

Major Donors Honored



Docent Bob Buell explains the vagaries of the Leather Oak to donors on the “ambitious tour” of Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve.

It was a dark and stormy Saturday morning on April 12th this year. Not the best day for a hike and picnic in the woods, but the 20 major donors invited by Canopy to tour the Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve were not daunted. All showed up and enthusiastically enjoyed exploring the upper reaches of the Preserve. This is the third straight year that Canopy has been able to offer this token of appreciation to its major donors.

Back by popular demand for the third straight season were docents Jessie Schilling (a Canopy member) and Bob Buell, both of whom have seemingly endless knowledge of the flora, fauna, and geology of the area. Donors were split up into two groups. The first group, led by Jessie, explored the

upper part of the ridge, hiking in a large loop, and then returned to the Preserve field station. The second, more ambitious group, started at the same point and hiked with Bob all the way to the field station on foot. Both groups enjoyed seeing the variety of trees and wonderful wild flowers and shared in a picnic lunch in the main classroom. Special thanks to Susan Wilson and Susan Rosenberg for arranging for the event and providing the great lunch. ■

TREE TRIVIA The state of Michigan claims more varieties of trees than all of Europe. The trees are spread over 19 million forested acres—more than half of the state. ■

Shaking Hands with the Sitka by Jana Dilley

Majestic, distant mountains, rugged, rocky beaches, wave-tossed sea otters, soaring bald eagles, and cold turquoise waves breaking over my kayak surround me on all sides. We have been battling the wind, waves and tides for hours—my fingers are numb, my stomach groans to be fed and my muscles shake from exertion and fatigue. My mind can hold only one thought: we can't hold out much longer, we have to find a place to rest and regain our strength. In this beautiful, remote and sometimes harsh land, you cannot let down your defenses.

Our inner resources depleted, we wash up on a wind-whipped shore and extract our gear and our dripping selves from our battered kayaks. Now that we are on firm, dry (more or less) ground, our immediate need is to get out of the cold, biting wind. We are deep in the Tongass National Forest in southeast Alaska—there are no cozy cabins to warm ourselves in, no human made structures for miles.

Fortunately, nature has provided her own shelter—the comfort of a Sitka spruce forest.

Into the safety and shelter of

the trees we go. Inside is another world. The wind, its biting tongues no longer lapping at our skin, has been reduced to nothing but noise, echoing through the trees. The barren rocky beach is replaced by a soft, welcoming cushion of moss and pine needles. The lush, living smell of evergreen trees calms our nerves and relaxes our minds.



Canopy program director Jana Dilley pitches her tent in a forest of Sitka spruces.

Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*) is Alaska's state tree. It is the 2nd most abundant tree in the state (Western hemlock is at the top.) The Sitka has sharp needles growing from all sides

of its branches—a trait common only to spruce. The residents in the nearby town of Gustavus tell me that the quickest way to identify these trees is to shake hands with one—if it hurts, it's a Sitka. The average tree grows to 150'–225' in height and lives for 500 to 700 years. They are found from sea level to 3000' in elevation.

This part of the Tongass has only in recent geological history been released from the freezing grip of glaciers. Sitka spruce is just one part of the post-glacial evolution. Plant succession begins with lichens and mosses, followed by lupine, fireweed, willow and alder. These plants pave the way for the Sitka, which is considered a secondary succession species, along with hemlock, blueberry, devil's club, and skunk cabbage.

Here underneath the shelter of the Sitka is where we set up our camp. An accommodating host, the forest watches over us through the night, and welcomes us in the morning. I may never visit Alaska again, but never will I forget the trees that took me in from the cold. I'm proud to say that I have shaken hands with a Sitka. ■

Canopy and the City of Palo Alto Team Up

If you spend a lot of time in Palo Alto's parks, you may have noticed some changes lately. This winter, Canopy teamed up with the Palo Alto parks department to plant trees in parks all around town. Canopy volunteers have helped plant three new redwoods, 13 crape myrtles and 22 cherries. We kicked off the plantings with a project in Hoover Park, and continued with plantings in Scott Street, Rinconada, Johnson, and the Lawn Bowling Green.

"It is a pleasure working with Canopy and adding to the green beauty of our city" says Park Superintendent Don Piana.

The Paradox Walnut Experiment

Another exciting collaboration between Canopy and the City is an experimental project to study the effects of the different microclimates of the Bay Area. Paradox Walnut trees are currently being planted in San Francisco and surrounding areas. They will be frequently visited in coming years by scientists and schoolchildren. Data collected about the trees will be used to show how microclimates affect individual plants. Because the trees are identical genetically, all differences will be attributable to environmental and social factors. The Para-



Kacie Drager proudly finishes planting a Paradox Walnut in Mitchell Park.

dox Walnut was chosen for this project because it seems to be an ideal urban tree. It produces no pollen—an allergen to some people; does not drop nuts—a potential tripping hazard, and has deep roots—less likely to pull up pavement. These trees also boast a pleasant smell!

Twelve Canopy volunteers helped to plant another dozen Paradox Walnut trees in Hopkins Creekside, Greer, Briones, Rinconada, and Mitchell Parks as well as the Municipal Service Center. For more information on this project, visit www.onetrees.org. ■

Tree Trivia Quiz

What species of trees does the City of Palo Alto tree ordinance protect?

Coast live oak, Valley oak, Coast Redwood.

What types of trees should NOT be watered?

Native oak trees—they are naturally drought tolerant and overwatering can lead to oak root fungus. All other trees should get regular water, especially in the dry summer months!

How often should you water trees?

One a week during the hot, dry summer months. In the winter, once a month may do.

Why is it important to keep weeds, grass and other plants outside the tree's dripline?

Other plants compete with the tree for water and nutrients.

Why is it important to not nick your tree with the lawn mower?

Even small wounds can create a site for insects and disease to attack the tree.

Should young street trees be fertilized?

No! Fertilizing can cause more harm than good. It can burn the tender young roots of 1–2 year old trees. If you are concerned with the health of a street tree, contact Canopy or the City Tree Division. ■

Fungus Fighters at Work at Gunn High School



A local Boy Scout troop helps out on Fungus Fighters Day at Gunn High School—one of Canopy's many Arbor Month activities.

Calendar of Events — Please Join Us!

July 12	Tree Care Survey
August 20	Tree Care Workshop
August 23	Tree Care Workshop

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