

LIVING AMONG OAKS?

HOW TO RESTORE LOS ANGELES COUNTY'S OAK WOODLANDS BY STARTING IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD

Dear Homeowner,

We need your help! The mountains, foothills, and valleys of Los Angeles County were once the site of majestic oak woodlands. These oak woodlands are the ancestral homelands of Indigenous peoples who continue to steward oak woodlands through cultural practices. This pamphlet provides information to residents who are new to appreciating or to living among oaks: how to protect oaks in the residential landscape, why oak woodlands are important to Los Angeles County's natural heritage, and what benefits oak woodlands provide to both human and non-human communities and how you can protect, restore, and preserve these amazing trees.



Circa 1870 landscape painting by Hermann Herzog of oak trees in a valley near Los Angeles. Courtesy of the Robert B. Honeyman, Jr. Collection of Early Californian and Western American Pictorial Material. Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.

The Los Angeles County General Plan, which guides future development in the county, set a policy to ensure no net loss of existing oak and native woodlands. Oaks face many threats including drought, climate change, and development pressures. To help achieve this goal of conserving and perpetuating oak woodlands, homeowners can contribute by preserving existing oak trees while protecting and planting new oak seedlings, which will be the oak woodlands of the future.

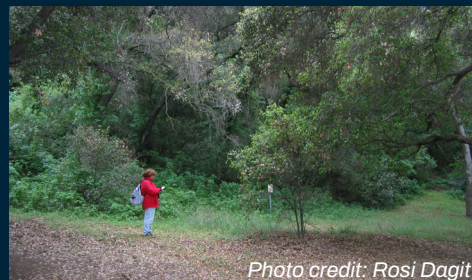


Photo credit: Rosi Dagit



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Every spring, oak seedlings sprout in many backyards, planted by squirrels, scrub jays, woodpeckers, and other wildlife. Homeowners can contribute to the Los Angeles County goal of no net loss by taking some simple steps :

- » **Re-design building projects** to preserve existing oaks
- » **Allow oak seedlings to grow** under and around oaks
- » **Integrate oaks** into drought-tolerant landscape designs
- » **Locate structures, driveways, and paths away from existing oaks** to minimize ground disturbance near roots
- » **Water oak seedlings only once a week** for the first two years and then stop giving them summer water
- » **Utilize mulch** to protect soil moisture around oak seedlings and saplings.
- » **Protect oak seedlings from wildlife** with tree tubes, milk cartons, and above- and belowground wire fencing to prevent them from being eaten.



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As your oak seedling matures you will see a wider variety of birds, insects, and other wildlife appear in your backyard. Oak trees provide an outsized contribution to the local ecosystem where they grow. They provide food and shelter to thousands of species of plants, wildlife, and insects. They improve the air we breathe and the quality of water we drink. They hold water in our watersheds to keep the soil from drying out, recharge groundwater, help to stabilize soil and prevent erosion, lower the air and soil temperature, and provide cooling shade, while enhancing views and property values. In addition, some species of oak have fire-resistant qualities and when maintained following guidelines from Los Angeles County Fire and Planning, may block embers from igniting structures.

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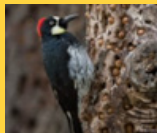
California Sister (*Adelpha californica*)

Photo credit: © 2007 Ron Wolf. All Rights Reserved



Western Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio rutulus*)

Photo credit: ©2011 Christopher L. Christie



Acorn Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*)

Photo credit: Hayley Crews



Gold Hunter's Hairstreak (*Satyrium auretorum*)

Photo credit: © Chris Mallory



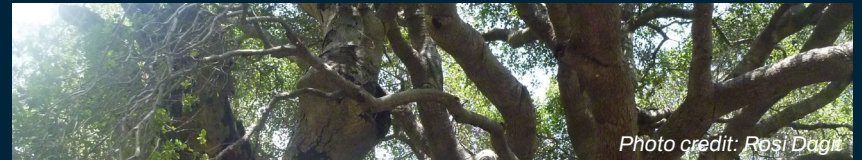
California Scrub Jay (*Aphelocoma californica*)

Photo credit: Chris Orr / Great Backyard Bird Count



Nuttall's Woodpecker (*Picoides nuttallii*)

Photo credit: Hairy Woodpecker, Photo by Mick Thompson



To slow climate change, greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced. Oak trees have dense wood which can capture or “sequester” more carbon than many other types of trees. Oak trees can also live for centuries, sequestering carbon for centuries. When mature oak trees are cut down, the carbon that was stored in the trees and soil will begin to release back into the atmosphere, contributing again to climate change. This is another reason why preserving mature oaks is just as important as protecting and planting new ones.

Mature oak trees over eight inches in diameter, measured four and a half feet from the ground are regulated in Los Angeles County. To cut down a mature oak, a lengthy process to obtain an Oak Tree Permit is required. The permitting process may include planting more oak trees to take the place of the oak that will be cut down, an appraisal of the value of the oak tree, and payment of this amount into an oak conservation fund to ensure no net loss of Los Angeles County oak woodlands. One way to save time and avoid fees is to integrate oak trees into your project design and avoid cutting down any oak trees.

Preserving and restoring Los Angeles County's oak woodlands can begin in your own backyard. By preserving existing oak trees, and protecting and planting new oak seedlings, you can become an OAK TREE STEWARD today!

To learn more about the importance and benefits of oak trees, and about Los Angeles County's oak tree protections, please contact us:

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Kind regards,
LA County Planning

