YOU MAY ALREADY BE FAMILIAR WITH Canopy’s Planting and Young Tree Care programs. But are you familiar with our Mature Tree Care program? Canopy strives to care for our urban forest in all its stages—we plant new trees, make sure they are watered and cared for during the vulnerable first five years, and make sure they are given the right conditions to maximize their life and vitality. This last part is the aim of the Mature Tree Care program, which seeks to extend the lives of mature public trees and to educate the public on the proper care of mature trees. The program focuses on (but is not limited to) three main topics: fungus, ivy and water.

Fungus Among Us

Several species of parasite fungi live almost everywhere in Bay Area soils. Given the right conditions, such as consistent and excess moisture, these fungi will become active and begin to decay a tree. Unaddressed, fungus will cause long term decline and early death of the tree. Fungus becomes a problem when the root crown (also called the root flare, the area where the roots meet the trunk) of your tree is wet, especially during warm weather. This happens when the root crown is in a consistently wet environment, such as when there is soil or plant material surrounding the base of the tree. Root crown fungus dies when it is exposed to air; thus the life of the tree is prolonged when the root crown is dry and exposed to air.

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Attacking the Giant Green Snot Gob

Part of protecting trees from fungus includes removing ivy, lawn and other competing plants from the area around

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the tree. These plants can hide defects such as areas of decay, and can trap moisture around the root crown, creating the perfect environment for fungus. Garbage collects under ivy and it creates a breeding ground for rats. Ivy can be such an eyesore to tree lovers that Cass Turnbull, founder of Plant Amnesty, dubbed it “the giant green snot gob.” Ideally all competing plants within the drip line should be removed. Laying mulch around the trunk, but leaving the root crown exposed, can help keep ivy and other plants from returning.

Water, Water, Water

Watering advice can be confusing. When trees are young (in the first five years after they are planted) they need to be watered weekly no matter what the species. Once they get past those first five years, watering advice becomes a bit more nuanced. Native trees, mainly coast live oaks and valley oaks, are adapted to our wet winters and dry summers and do not need to be watered except in extreme circumstances. Watering can actually cause harm to the tree by creating an environment suitable for fungus growth. Other species of trees, such as birch and southern magnolia, come from moister climates and will need regular water throughout their lives. No matter what the species, it’s important to keep water away from the trunk of the tree — the root flare environment. Watering should take place away from the trunk, but within the dripline. Sprinklers should be placed so that they do not spray directly onto the trunk-doing so can wear away a tree’s bark and leave a wound.

Join the Club!

Canopy’s Ivy Busters workdays put volunteers to work removing ivy from around the mature trees in Palo Alto’s parks. This extends the life of the trees and adds to the beauty of the parks. We always welcome more volunteers to help out. Our next Ivy Busters workday will be held September 17, 2005 from 9 a.m. to 12 noon in Mitchell Park near the Mitchell Park Library. We will be working in conjunction with Friends of the Palo Alto Parks. All volunteers will be eligible to enter a raffle drawing for prizes donated by local companies, including a cooking class from Draeger’s, a free one-hour consultation from The Care of Trees, a body treatment from Watercouse Way, a fabulous chocolate cake and more! We need volunteers to help pull ivy, bake cookies, work the registration and raffle tables, set up and clean up. If you are interested in volunteering, contact Canopy.

Don’t Wait for an S.O.S. from Your Tree—Water Now!

We may have had a wet winter in Palo Alto this year, but that doesn’t mean your young trees won’t need your help during the hot, dry summer months. Trees need a little extra TLC during the first five years after they are planted. This includes weekly watering during the summer. A slow trickle of water from the hose for about 30 minutes will promote deep root growth, allowing your tree to sustain itself in the future. You should water in the area between the trunk and the dripline. The drip-line is the imaginary line to the ground created by

Ask the Arborist

Do you have a burning tree question? Send it to Canopy at ask@canopy.org. We’ll compile your questions and publish the answers from arborists. Here’s this issue’s question and answer:

Why are some once-popular trees no longer planted?

by Bruce W. Hagen, Urban Forester, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

Many tree species once commonly planted in California have faded in popularity. Reasons for this include poor adaptability, susceptibility to common pests, litter or other nuisance problems, hazard potential, and tendency to damage infrastructure. Invasiveness, pollen and allergy potential, and biogenic emissions have also been added to the list more recently. The introduction of new, destructive pests is quickly becoming the principal factor affecting the health, longevity, and value of our urban and rural trees.

Once-common trees that have fallen from grace include Monterey pine, elm, eucalyptus and redwood. You can find out more on these trees in the Fall 2004 issue of California Trees, available at www.californiatreelife.org/education.html.

You’ll also find a wealth of information about tree pests and diseases on the Internet:

- Bark beetles of North America: www.bugwood.org/barkbeetles/index.html
- California Oak Mortality Task Force: www.suddenoakdeath.org
- California Oak Disease and Arthropod Database: http://phytophore.ucdavis.edu/
- Pitch Canker Task Force: http://tifp.cdf.ca.gov/pitch_canker/
- Pine pitch canker information: www.cnr.berkeley.edu/forestry/curt_prop/pitch/pitch.html
- CDF web site for pest management: www.fire.ca.gov/ResourceManagement/ForestPest.asp
- Forest pests of North America: www.forestpests.org
- Insect pests & plant diseases in Northern California: http://acwm.co.la.ca.us/scripts/pestpdf.pl
- UC Davis Integrated Pest Management: www.ipm.ucdavis.edu
- USDA Forest Service Forest Insect and Disease Leaflet: www.fws.gov/pic/picfaq.html

Following are some strategies for minimizing future pest and disease problems.

Think diversely. A broader diversity of trees in our urban landscapes will guard against the possibility of large-scale devastation by both native and introduced insect and disease pests.

Select from a broad palette of plants. Plant no more than 10 percent of any species, no more than 20 percent of any genus, and no more than 30 percent of any family.

Survey your neighborhood/city region and determine which trees are most successful.

Analyze the site conditions and select a tree species that is most adaptable to those conditions.

Review the environmental tolerances of the candidate species. Characterize the native habitat, e.g., riparian, bottomland, swamp, upland, ridge top, rich valley bottoms, canyons, and zones. Try to match the environmental tolerances to the site conditions.

Consider hardiness. Use the Sunset Climate Zones and maps. These zones account for latitude, elevation, coastal influence, the continental air influence, influence of mountains and hills, local terrain, winter lows, summer highs, length of growing season, humidity and rainfall patterns.

Develop a species profile for each tree by collecting data regarding the tree's characteristics, tolerances, requirements, etc.; and then compile the information into a tree selection matrix. Select trees that are adaptable to a wide range of conditions.

If planting blocks or strips of uniformity (species, cultivars, or clones of proven adaptability) scatter them throughout the city to achieve spatial as well as biological diversity.

Reduce the potential for disease spread through natural root grafts, which can occur when the same species of tree is planted along streets. Break up the continuity by using different species or species from a different genus.

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Two New Local Tree Books

by Susan Rosenberg

“Troubled” is the only word I can use to describe my Palo Alto High son’s reaction to finding a book on theoffee table titled, Bark: The formation, characteristics, and uses of bark around the world. I assume he was deathly afraid of what his buddies would think had they known I read books on tree bark.

It’s been years since that incident. Bark now resides on my bookshelf. In its place on the coffee table are two newly published books, Trees of Stanford and Environs, by Ron N. Bracewell, and Trees of Los Altos, by Ann Coombs. I recently found my son on the sofa, thumbing through both, looking for his favorite and familiar trees.

Ron N. Bracewell, the L.M. Terman Professor of Electrical Engineering Emeritus at Stanford is also a mathematician, a physicist, and a radio astronomer. His interest in trees began during his boyhood in Australia and has continued since moving to this area in 1955. Bracewell’s book is full of the “nuts and bolts” of trees with flowers or brightly colored leaves for year-round viewing.

For those who enjoy the spectacular aesthetics trees provide, she has included a calendar filled with color photographs of each tree from the wide variety of trees found in Los Altos. California. If you want to learn more about the trees in your yard or you’re considering planting a new tree, Coombs’ book has information that will help you make that decision and an address to see, first-hand, what a full grown tree will look like. She has also included a valuable list of recommendations for planting under power lines or near streams.

Like Palo Alto and Stanford, Los Altos has a number of large, stately oaks throughout the city. To prevent further loss of the treasured trees Coombs has included a chapter titled, “Loving Care of Old Oak Trees” with detailed advice on how to keep oaks healthy.

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THE TRISTANIA FAMILY OF TREES are hardy evergreens with slow growth and interesting bark. Once established, they require little watering—and they can grow in poor soil with poor drainage in sunny, shady, or even foggy locations, making them a favorite in San Francisco. Variants include the *tristania laurina* (small leaf tristania, aka Water Gum or Swamp Myrtle) and *tristania laurina* ‘elegant’, both of which have clusters of small yellow flowers in the spring. They typically grow 15 to 25 feet with a 15-foot spread and are, therefore, a good candidate for planting under power lines. The “elegant” variety has wider leaves and its new growth is reddish in color. The *tristania conferta* (Brisbane Box), whose flowers are white, can grow to 60 feet.

Canopy and volunteers from Roche recently planted new tristania in the new downtown Heritage Park (see page 3 of this newsletter). You can find more details about this (and many other street trees) in the “Tree Library” on the Canopy web site (www.canopy.org/db).

Volunteers from the Palo Alto Kiwanis and local Paly Key Club joined Canopy to plant new trees at the Palo Alto Golf Course.

ON SATURDAY, MAY 7, two Canopy volunteers joined Canopy staff early in the morning at Shoreline Park to walk a 5k and run a 10k. They were part of the Human Race, a fundraising effort put on by the Volunteer Center of Silicon Valley. The Human Race raises money for local non-profits by challenging people to a 10k or 5k run or 5k walk in support of their favorite non-profit organization.

Participants collect pledges in return for completing the course. Total, volunteers helped raise $2,500 to support Canopy’s urban forestry programs. Pledges came in from such diverse places as France, Maryland, and Minnesota. Even employees at SkyStream Networks in Sunnyvale pitched in to help with the effort.

There’s still time to make a post-race pledge to Canopy before June 15. You may do so by going to Canopy’s web site, www.canopy.org/humanrace. Thanks to all the volunteers and donors who helped make the Human Race a success!

To volunteer with Canopy, please contact Program Director Jana Dilley at 650.964.6110 or by e-mail at jana@canopy.org.

**Volunteer Spotlight: “Human Race”**

**Know Your Street Trees: Tristania**

**Trees for El Camino Project Update**

Plans for the second phase of the Trees for El Camino Project median planting are now in the hands of Caltrans which has jurisdiction over El Camino Real and must give its approval before the City of Palo Alto can proceed. Chris Rafferty, landscape architect for the City of Palo Alto, anticipates hearing from Caltrans by the first week in June.

The medians included in this phase are: Dinah’s Court to Monroe Drive (at Adobe Creek), Los Robles Avenue to Maybell Avenue, Wilton Avenue to Matadero Avenue, and Park Boulevard to Stanford Avenue. The trees, a mix of London plane, red maple, oak, and redwood, will provide a canopy of shade over the busy thoroughfare.

The Trees for El Camino Project, a Palo Alto based nonprofit, spearheaded the project and raised $250,000 toward the purchase and planting of these trees. The first phase of the project, completed in January, 2004, included medians between Embarcadero Road and Park Boulevard.