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Contributors to this newsletter are:

### Writing/Editing

Bill Courington  
Hal Lovell, Jr.  
Dave Muffly  
Forest Preston, III  
Susan Rosenberg  
Greta Scuyler

### Photography

Tony Carrasco, p. 6  
Jim Sakols, p. 4, 5 bottom  
Hal Lovell, Jr., p. 5 top

### Design

Susan Wilson

### Illustrations

Tony Carrasco (photo enhancement), p. 6

# 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.*



WINTER 1999-2000

3921 East Bayshore Road

Palo Alto, CA 94303

phone 650-964-6110

fax 650-964-6173

email [info@canopy.org](mailto:info@canopy.org)

[www.canopy.org](http://www.canopy.org)

## A Tree for Christmas?

As Christmas approaches, you may be wondering if you should buy a live Christmas tree. It sounds like the environmentally correct thing to do, right? Dave Muffly, Program Director for Canopy and a certified arborist, cautions against buying a live Christmas tree without serious thought. "The trick with a live tree is that, after Christmas, we get calls from people asking, 'Do you want my live Christmas tree?' If you want to celebrate

**If you want to celebrate Christmas and have a tree, buy a tree that you're going to want to have growing in your yard.**

Christmas and have a tree, buy a tree that you're going to want to have growing in your yard" or in another location where you know it will be appreciated and cared for. Muffly adds another twist. "Considering the gasoline used in transporting the tree and other resources expended, over the long haul an artificial tree might actually be the most environmentally sound choice."

Brian Maloney, a Portola Valley landscape designer, likes the idea of a live Christmas

tree as long as the tree is replanted. "The big advantage is that it's not filling up the landfills" he says.

What kinds of trees are best for the Bay Area climate? For pine trees, Muffly likes the Italian Stone Pine (*Pinus pinea*) or the Lace Bark Pine (*Pinus bungeana*), both of which are hearty and grow well. The Lace Bark Pine may be hard to find, but has a "beautiful and unusual bark," says Muffly.

According to Muffly, Blue Spruce does not like it here and Monterey Pines grow well at first and then die quickly. In the Cedar family, good choices include the Deodar Cedar (*Cedrus deodara*) and Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*). Deciduous conifer trees including Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) and Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) are also interesting ideas. The drawback of deciduous conifers is that although they maintain the classic Christmas tree shape, they do lose their needles in the winter, giving you the structure of a Christmas tree without the messy greenery.

Continues next pages.

## Xmas Trees from page 1.

Live Christmas trees range in size from 7 to 20 gallon root containers. Prices range from \$20 for a tabletop tree to up to \$300 for a full tree. Lars Nielsen of Roger Reynolds Nursery in Menlo Park suggests keeping a live Christmas indoors for no more than 10–14 days. Most living trees enjoy fog, humidity and moisture and can dry out quickly when brought indoors with low humidity and high temperatures.

After replanting a live Christmas tree outside, remember to water the tree. “You really have to take care of it afterwards,” says Nielson, adding that replanted trees do best when you try to match their naturally moist environment.

Muffly suggests some nontraditional ideas for Christmas trees that might work especially well in the Bay Area. “I like the idea of using citrus trees. They’re densely evergreen and often come with their own Christmas tree ornaments.” After a few years of live citrus Christmas trees, “you might plant an orchard and eat the fruit and that’s pretty nice,” he says.

His citrus suggestions include the Satsuma Mandarin, Minneola Tangelo, and Washington Navel, all of which bear fruit at Christmastime. Each grow well in our area given regular watering and fertilization. What about the traditional pine tree? As Muffly explains, “The whole idea of a Christmas tree originated in northern Europe. Pine trees were common. We’ve taken a ritual that may have made sense in its original

environment and moved to it an environment where it might make less ecological sense.” If you do end up buying a live pine tree, don’t replant it under power lines. Pine trees grow quickly and the city has to come to cut them back (see “Right Tree, Right Place Program” article in the autumn 1999 issue).

According to Nielsen most cut Christmas trees are grown and shipped from Oregon. A cut tree does not necessarily damage the environment, as it is often cut so that a new tree grows from the roots without replanting.

And for cut trees, the Palo Alto Recycling Center offers options for recycling after the holidays. Paula Borges, a city Recycling Coordinator, says that residents of single family homes and apartment complexes may place trees by the curbside or bring trees to the Recycling Center. Curbside pickup runs from December 27–January 3 and trees may be dropped off at the center through the end of January. Special instructions for apartment complex curbside pickup will be mailed to residents. The city requires that residents remove Christmas tree stands and cut trees into lengths of no longer than 4 feet. The recycled trees are composted with the city’s yard trimmings. The compost is then sold to local landscaping companies, given away during the City’s compost giveaway days, or sold at the landfill, says Borges. ■

## Tree Talk Coming— Register Early

Rosalind Creasy will speak on “Working Fruit Trees into your Landscape” at Canopy’s Tree Talk Saturday, January 29, 10 to noon. Ros is a leading national authority on environment-friendly landscaping and a pioneer of the edible landscaping movement. She is a three-time winner of the Garden Writers of America’s “Best Book of the Year” award and its “Award for Excellence.”

Her *Complete Book of Edible Landscaping* and recent *Edible Garden* book series are superb guides for anyone wishing to include beautiful and bountiful plants in their home landscape. Ros, who lives and gardens in Los Altos, will share her extensive, practical knowledge of fruit tree selection for our region.

Ros is a popular speaker so advance registration is encouraged.

Lucie Stern Center.  
\$10 per person. Call or send an email to Canopy to reserve your seat. ■

## Landscape for Energy Efficiency

Palo Alto's building boom presents opportunities for using trees in ways that don't normally occur to us. Here are some tips which can be used effectively on existing properties too.

**A**ttention to details outside the house moderates temperatures inside all year long...

Most home builders today understand the need to conserve resources in new houses. They are interested in energy-efficient designs that will keep houses comfortable while lowering utility costs. Few are aware that one of the least expensive and most effective ways to hold

One large tree has the cooling power of 15 air-conditioning units.

down energy needs inside the house actually takes place outside.

Carefully planned landscaping can moderate the impact of the weather—lessening the burden we place on heating and cooling systems. In *Landscaping that Saves Energy and Dollars* (The Globe Pequot Press), landscape designer and gardening columnist Ruth S. Foster describes the effects of garden design on the microclimate of a property. One large tree, for example, has the cooling power of 15 air-conditioning units; a shaded lawn requires 95 percent less water than one in full sun; and a windbreak can lower the cost of heating your house by 10 to 25 percent.

**Cold Climates** In cold climates, the goal is to shelter the home from prevailing winds while capturing the heat of the sun. Protect your house by erecting a barrier of evergreens perpendicular to the wind direction.

A second goal is to encourage the sun to warm your house. Even in the coldest temperatures, sunlight hitting a window will raise the temperature inside. Plant deciduous trees by the sun-facing side of your home; they shed their leaves in winter and let the light through but provide shade on hot summer days. The system even adapts to variations in weather patterns: in a cold spring trees bud later; if a fall is warm they retain their leaves longer.

**Hot Climates** In hot climates a canopy of leafy trees can keep the sun from reaching your roof or entering windows. They provide shade—a dense tree can block 95 percent of light from the sun and 75 percent of its warmth. And they draw heat from the atmosphere, releasing moisture.

Don't forget to protect air conditioners: shaded units operate 10 percent more efficiently than those in direct sun. Avoid paved outdoor areas that will retain heat

and reflect glare into the house. Driveways should be made of a light-colored material and located north of the house, if possible.

Except in arid areas, try to encourage cooling breezes. If possible, build on high ground. Group trees to create a funnel that channels winds toward your home.

In very humid areas trees grow easily and provide shade. But, they block breezes and add moisture to the air. Plant tall palms. They provide a canopy keeping sun off your roof while allowing refreshing breezes to pass beneath. ■

—Extracted from a recent issue of *House Beautiful Home Building* magazine  
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For more information:

*Cooling your Home Naturally*  
Department of Energy  
Consumer Information Center  
7-A, P.O. Box 100, Pueblo, Co.,  
81002. \$1.

*Energy Efficient and Environmental Landscaping*.  
Appropriate Solutions Press;  
(800) 266-5766, Dept. 1110.  
\$17.95

*Landscaping that Saves Energy and Dollars*  
The Globe Pequot Press; (800)  
266-5766, Dept 1110, \$17.95.

## Youth Come Through for Canopy in Three of Our Fall Plantings

The fall planting season is well under way. So far—through November 30—we have planted 29 trees in four locations. The highlights of the season have been the new grove of Frontier Elms (12 trees) planted at the Palo Alto Animal Shelter and the new “Athena” Elm planted at Ohlone School.

On Saturday afternoon October 30, with the help of Palo Alto Boy Scout Troop #52 and volunteers from the Palo Alto Animal Services and Placement Center, nine Frontier Elms were planted in a new Elm tree grove on the south side of the Animal Shelter’s parking lot. On November 6, with the help of Palo Alto Girl Scout Troop #52, three more Frontier Elms were planted on the west side of the parking lot. The trees will provide shade for the

parking lot, reduce the temperature during the hot summer afternoons, and absorb harmful ultra violet radiation while serving as a wind-break. The Elm grove will provide a sense of scale to the Animal Shelter and give the building a sense of belonging on the site, which has been lacking. It will also provide an exercise and recreation area for the shelter and its volunteers, employees and our local residents.

Frontier Elms (*Ulmus ‘Frontier’*) were selected because they have proven to grow well in our area, are fast growing, drought tolerant and disease resistant. They have a tall upright shape that will provide fast shade for the hot parking lot. As a bonus, these deciduous trees have an excellent purplish-red fall color.

Ohlone School, on Amarillo Avenue, lost a Fruitless Mulberry

tree that was planted in the planter in the breezeway separating the two main wings of the school. Last year, Mr. Robert Sui’s 2nd and 3rd grade class (Room 17) were determined to help the environment. To make a long story short, after a bake sale, and other fund raising efforts the funds were given to Canopy. Canopy decided a good use for the gift was to replace the lost Mulberry tree.



Dave Muffly instructs volunteers from Boy Scout Troop # 52.



Two young scouts help by soaking the root ball before planting the tree.



Bryan Steinbach waters a tree.



Canopy planting leaders learning to loosen rootballs.

On November 16, under the direction of Canopy program director Dave (“Kids, who can tell me what ‘deciduous’ means?”) Muffly, an Athena Elm tree was planted in the breezeway. Twenty-six students from Mr. Sui’s 2nd and 3rd grade classes of last year and this year helped plant the tree and can be proud of the results of their efforts.



Athena Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia* ‘Athena’) is a new variety of Chinese Elm introduced by the University of Georgia at their Athens, Georgia campus. Chinese Elm has proven to be a fast growing, tough, drought-tolerant tree in Palo Alto. The Athena has an improved, upright, spreading canopy that is an ideal shape for the breezeway where it is planted.

Canopy volunteers also planted four Red Oaks (*Quercus rubra*) on Driscoll Court. Seven trees—two London Plane trees (*Platanus acerifolia*), two Chinese Tallow (*Sapium sebiferum*) and three Green Ashes (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*)—were planted at the intersection of Kingsley and Byron. ■

## Meet Howell Lovell, Jr.— Canopy’s New ED

Canopy welcomes Howell Lovell, Jr. as our new executive director. He began as interim ED in early September. He had been the executive director of the northern California unit of Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic in Palo Alto. Prior to that, he served as executive director of Pets in Need in Redwood City.

Hal was a San Francisco attorney for 25 years. He was a sole practitioner specializing in family law. Growing up in Palo Alto and attending Lytton, Crescent Park, Jordan, Paly High and Stanford, Hal had no reason to leave the area. But then the US Army grabbed him and showed him such wonderful places as Fort Sill, Oklahoma; Fort Riley, Kansas; and the Republic of South Viet Nam.

He returned to Palo Alto where he raised his children—two boys and a girl—all of whom are out on their own. Hal lives in south Palo Alto and manages to keep active in the community. He has been a volunteer fundraiser for the Palo Alto Family YMCA on the Mid-Peninsula Y’s endowment committee. When Hal was active in San Francisco, he served as a director and officer in the Downtown San Francisco Garden Club. Currently, he is the president of the Kiwanis Club of Palo Alto and actively engages in community services with the Kiwanis. ■

## El Camino Tree Project

For the last year a group of Palo Alto's residents that includes an architect, developer, teacher, city planner, landscape architect, and Canopy's own Dave Muffly and Susan Rosenberg, has developed what they thought would be a dream for the "aesthetically blighted" El Camino Real...that it become a lush, tree-lined boulevard of large-canopy trees that not only shade the street but add beauty to the stretch of road that runs 5.5 miles, north border to south border. This vision is consistent with goals adopted in Palo Alto's Comprehensive Plan.

It's an ambitious plan that calls for the planting of over a thousand London Plane trees—a tree that lines streets in Paris, London, Barcelona, and Beijing. The London Plane is widely valued for several reasons:

- Large canopy provides shade to streets which otherwise generate enormous amounts of radiant heat
- High branching characteristic minimizes limb interference with trucks and reduces visual obstructions to business and street signs
- Roots grow deep into the soil rather than along the surface lifting sidewalks
- Disease resistant.
- A proven urban survivor.



Top: El Camino taken at about College Avenue. Bottom: Artist's rendering of El Camino planted with London Plane trees.

Once preliminary design drawings were developed the brainstorming began—a process designed to address questions about the project and enlist community-wide support. Presentations were made to City Council, City planning staff, City arborists, Chamber of Commerce, State Senator Byron Sher, Caltrans, real estate developers who own property along El Camino, University Rotary, neighborhood groups, and the Canopy steering committee.

For the most part, all those who participated in these sessions were

enthusiastic and willing to take on obstacles that are bound to occur.

City Council unanimously endorsed this project at the October 18th meeting and directed the City manager to earmark funds for developing design plans along the full length of the street. City planning staff, spurred by the work of this ad hoc committee, recognized the need to rewrite the El Camino Real Design Guidelines, last revised in 1979, that would guide landscape planting for new development.

Continues next page.

## Palo Alto Endowment Fund and Hobe's Make Generous Gifts

Canopy would like to thank both the Palo Alto Endowment Fund and Hobe's California Restaurants for their support of our programs. The Palo Alto Endowment Fund has given Canopy \$4,000 to support the OakWell native oak preservation project (see article right) using community volunteers and Gun High School students.

Hobe's California Restaurants have given us *free* blueberry coffeecake certificates to reward our volunteers for their efforts. So, the next time you help us, make sure you get your free coffee cake certificate, use it and be sure to thank Hobe's for their support. ■

### El Camino Trees from page 1.

The one exception has been Caltrans which has jurisdiction over the medians. Current Caltrans guidelines call for smaller trees (crepe myrtles, for example) in medians less than 12 feet wide, as most in Palo Alto are. Planting trees with large canopies in the median is essential to this project. Palo Alto, in conjunction with Menlo Park, (also developing a plan for London Planes along El Camino) will work with Caltrans to ensure planting London Plane trees in the medians.

This effort, seen as a community project for the new millennium, is a public-private initiative. It is a historical milestone for Palo Alto, a significant gift to the future of the community. ■

## OakWell Working to Improve the Oaks at Gunn

Canopy's OakWell volunteers have inventoried the native oaks in about two-thirds of urban Palo Alto (current count: 4413 coast live oaks, 687 valley oaks).

Project members have been struck by the extraordinary collection of oaks on the Gunn High School grounds. No public place in Palo Alto has so many grand valley and coast live oaks.

Many of Gunn's trees are in healthy surroundings. However, a surprising number of the finest native oaks are suffering in non-native conditions that can dramatically shorten their lives:

- 27 trees are being watered in summer to keep the grass around them green.
- 13 trees are surrounded by ivy.
- 8 trees have had dirt built up around their trunks.

These conditions encourage the growth of oak root fungus, which is the principal natural threat to native oaks. Prolonging the lives of these trees makes economic as well as esthetic sense. A dying tree must be removed to prevent injury or property damage, and doing so is expensive.

Canopy has received a grant from the Palo Alto Endowment Fund to work with Gunn students to extend the lives of Gunn's great oaks. The project, tentatively called *Fungus Fighters*, hopes to restore habitats to near-natural conditions by re-orienting sprinklers, replacing adjacent lawn with mulch, removing ivy, and removing dirt around trunks. Literally "getting their hands dirty," student volunteers will perform a community service and gain a first-hand lesson in ecological balance in their own schoolyard. The school district will get healthier, safer trees at no labor cost.

*Fungus Fighters* will be a challenging project for Canopy because it requires the cooperation of school officials in several departments. The project may take a few years to complete because some tasks, notably ivy removal, are time consuming. But the prospect of losing so many great trees prematurely is a strong motivator. And acting as a catalyst among students and school is just the sort of role Canopy hopes to play in the community. ■

## Canopy Winter Calendar

### Tree Planting

December 11

9:30 am

Pepper Avenue

January 8

9:30 am

Emerson and also  
on Hawthorne

January 22

9:30 am

Ramona Street

February 12

9:30 am

Old Palo Alto  
South

February 26

9:30 am

Crescent Park East

### Tree Talk

January 29, 10–12

Ros Creasy on

Fruit trees

Lucy Stern

Community Center

## Give a Tree for the Holidays

Is there someone on your gift list for whom it is hard to find the perfect gift? What do you give Uncle Charlie? Aunt Rose has everything. Cousin Steve only watches TV in his spare time. What do you do? We have a suggestion—have us plant a tree. For a donation of \$50.00 or more, Canopy will plant a tree this planting season in honor of the person you designate. We will acknowledge that a tree was planted in his/her honor in a future newsletter and send a card to the designee. You will have made a donation to help improve the quality of life in Palo Alto. If you would prefer to tell them yourself let us know, and we will send you the cards to give at the appropriate time.



To make this process as easy as possible for you, we have included a remittance envelope for your convenience. Wouldn't this also be a good time to begin or renew your donor/membership? It is because of the generosity of our community that we are able to continue the work that we do. ■

## Volunteer Opportunity

Canopy is looking for volunteers to do data entry. You pick the hours and the day(s) of the week. Canopy will pay in thank yous and Hobe's coffee cake—who could ask for anything more? Call Hal at 964-6110 if interested. ■

A \$50 tree  
donation for  
that perfect  
holiday gift.

## Canopy's Leadership

### Steering Committee

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*Chair*

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*Vice-Chair*

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### Advisory Committee

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