

# TREES FOR PACIFIC PALISADES

## Palisades Forestry Committee (PFC)

An IRS Section 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation

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

March 8, 2026

This list is for residents to find trees for their home yards, schools and parks. It is not for street trees in the parkway, where the City of LA has a Right Of Way easement (between the curb and sidewalk). The city requires a permit for any plantings, removals or pruning in the parkway. Please pay attention to the growing space information for each tree listed, as well as its mature size. Many of these trees may be too big for your home yard, though they may be good in schools or parks with more space.

The trees listed are generally climate appropriate for Pacific Palisades. Some look to the future of climate change in order to plant what will thrive now and in a warmer climate in the future.

Los Angeles includes many diverse climates as shown on Sunset map link below. Trees that are appropriate for Pacific Palisades are in Sunset Zones 22-24, from the inland valley of Palisades Highlands (Zone 22 or 23), to the coast facing foothills and flats of the Palisades mesas (Zone 23), to the immediate coastline (Zone 24).

Please pay careful attention to the tree selection criteria in the front of the tree list. The goal is to find the right tree for the right place. The list is a selection, not the whole universe of trees that may also be appropriate for your homes. The CalPoly website Selectree describes in detail hundreds of trees which may be good for you: [Selectree: A Tree Selection Guide](#) For natives, see the website for the Theodore Payne Foundation, which has a nursery in Sun Valley in the NE San Fernando Valley: <https://theodorepayne.org/> Other resources and information for trees and plants are in the Palisades Forestry Committee's website - [www.palisadesforestry.org](http://www.palisadesforestry.org) - including a list of fire tolerant trees. When ordering trees, use the scientific name, since common names are often shared by several different trees.

## TREE SELECTION CRITERIA

1. The **climate** (Sunset Zone map). <https://sunsetplantcollection.com/climate-zones/zone/los-angeles-region/>
2. Where is its **native land**? Native trees of Southern California; or from a similar climate like the Mediterranean, South Africa or Australia; or from a warmer climate (e.g. Mexico)?
3. **Drought tolerance** (water requirement - very low, low, medium or high?). Some high water / riparian trees may be appropriate where there is a nearby water source, such as Western Sycamores in canyons. Oaks generally don't like wet feet (e.g. in lawns), as they are acclimatized to primarily winter rains and dry summers (except Southern Live Oak can grow in irrigated lawns).
4. **Growing space** for the roots, and the height and canopy width at maturity? Any overhead wires?
5. **Proximity to hardscape and structures** (risk of root damage, defensible space).
6. **Other Characteristics:** Evergreen or Deciduous, flowers, scent, fall color, strength of limbs, susceptibility to disease, etc.?
7. **Diversity of species.** Monoculture can lead to disease and bug attacks that wipe whole neighborhoods of the same tree: Dutch Elm Disease for example. Yet some grouping or repetition of design may be more pleasing and calming than one of everything.
8. **Sense of place**, cultural considerations, and design concept.
9. **Fire Tolerance:**

No tree is fireproof, but some are more tolerant than others. Trees that are well hydrated and well maintained (pruned for health and safety, droppings cleaned up) do better in a fire. Distance from structures is a factor in fire tolerance and structure fire risk. Buildings have very little water content, but trees have higher water content that can better tolerate flying embers and heat from flames. An urban home on fire is more likely to burn a close-by tree than the tree burning the home. Trees can act as a windbreak to catch embers or redirect them over structures.

All but four of the trees listed came from the Palisades Forestry Committee's Fire Tolerant Tree List posted on the PFC website. See the PFC website for the list of fire tolerant trees: [www.palisadesforestry.org](http://www.palisadesforestry.org) The last four trees at the end of this list are not on that list: Tipu, Pepper, Chitalpa, and Soapbark. Again, all trees can burn, and the Fire Tolerant Tree List is not a guarantee. Furthermore, there are more fire tolerant trees listed there than are listed here.

**No tree is perfect. They are living creatures with imperfections like the rest of us. Tree selection is a compromise and a search for the "Right Tree for the Right Place."**

## **TREES FOR PACIFIC PALISADES**

\* Schoolyard Use; E = Evergreen; D = Deciduous; N = Native (Calif. or SW USA).

See CalPoly's website **Selectree** for detailed tree descriptions and photos. Most of the information here is from that website: [selectree.calpoly.edu](http://selectree.calpoly.edu)

**OAKS** (3 are natives, 2 not):

- **\*Coast Live Oak** / *Quercus agrifolia*, California native (N) and the most common oak in the Santa Monica Mountains, dark green leaf, Evergreen (E), 70' high x 30-70' wide at maturity, low water, over 7' planting area, no shade tolerance. Doesn't like wet feet (no watering under the canopy, except as a newly planted tree for the first few years to get established). No shade tolerance.
- **\*Cork Oak** / *Quercus suber*, from the Mediterranean, cork bark (kids love the cork bark), dark green leaf, E, 70' x 70' at maturity, low water, 4'-7' planting area. No shade tolerance.
- **\*Island Oak** / *Quercus tomentella*, Channel Islands native (N), 50' x 25-40', dark green leaf, E, low water, over 7' planting area. No shade tolerance.
- **\*Southern Live Oak** / *Quercus virginiana*, Southern US, 80' x 60-75', medium water (tolerates lawn watering), dark green leaf, Partly Deciduous, over 7' planting area. No shade tolerance.
- **Netleaf Oak** / *Quercus rugosa*, US Southwest (N) & Mexico native (future climate adaptable and resilient), red new growth, green leaf, E, best at filtering pollutants, 60' high x 20-40' wide, low water, over 7' planting area. No shade tolerance. Not classified by the Selectree website as a school yard tree, though its branch strength is strong.

**NATIVES** (California or US Southwest) - See also the 3 native **Oaks** above:

- **\*Western Redbud** / *Cercis occidentalis*, California native (N), pink flowers along stems, some fall color in colder canyons, D, 26' high x 10' wide, medium water, 2-4' growing space.
- **\*Toyon** / *Heteromeles arbutifolia*, red berries, CA native (N), E, 25 x 8-15', low water, 4-7' growing space.
- **\*Western Sycamore** / *Platanus racemosa*, CA native (N), D, 80 x 20-50', a riparian tree found in our canyons, requiring high water use, over 7' growing space.
- **\*Thornless Honey Mesquite** / *Prosopis glandulosa* 'Maverick', a hybrid of a US Southwest desert native (N), D, yellow flowers, 35' x 25-35', very low water, 4-7' growing space.
- **Southern California Black Walnut** / *Juglans californica*, CA native (N), fall color, D, 30' x 15-30', medium water, 4-7' growing space.
- **\*Desert Willow** / *Chilopsis linearis*, flowers lavender, pink, rose or white, D, a Southwest desert native (N), Sunset Zones 21-23 (not 24), 30-40' x 10-20', very low water, 2-4' growing space.

**MORE TREES:**

- **\*Maidenhair Tree** / *Ginkgo biloba*, fall color, D, buy Male trees (female tree has an odor), 70' high x 25' wide, medium water, 4-7' growing space.
- **\*Jacaranda** / *Jacaranda mimosifolia*, purple flower, Semi-D, 50' x 15-30', medium water, 4-7' growing space.
- **\*Brisbane Box** / *Lophostemon confertus*, E, 50' x 10-30', medium water, 4-7' growing space.
- **\*Chinese Elm** / *Ulmus parvifolia*, weeping, fall color, Partly D, 60' x 50-70', medium water, over 7' growing space.
- **\*Moreton Bay Fig** / *Ficus macrophylla*, a giant tree for parks that have the room, E, 60' x 70-75', medium water, **way over 7'** growing space, root damage risk.
- **Yew Pine** / *Podocarpus macrophyllus*, E, 30' x 20', medium water, 2-4' growing space.
- **\*African Fern Pine** / *Afrocarpus falcatus* (fka *Podocarpus gracilior*), E, 50' x 50', medium water, over 7' growing space.
- **\*Paperbark** / *Melaleuca quinquenervia*, flowers pink, purple or yellow, paper-like peeling bark, E, 40' x 15-25', low water, 4-7' growing space.
- **\*Lemon-scented Gum** / *Eucalyptus citriodora*, flower and mature bark are white, crushed leaves have lemon scent, E, 70' x 50', low water, over 7' growing space.

- **Citrus** species, E, fruit, can be espaliered for a screen, medium water:
  - **Orange**, 30' x 15-25', 4-7' growing space.
  - **Lemon**, 25' x 10', 4-7' growing space.
  - **Mandarin**, 30' x 15-25', 4-7' growing space.
  - **Kumquat**, 15' x 5-10', 2-4' growing space.
- **\*Tipu Tree** / *Tipuana tipu*, golden yellow flowers, D (Sunset: Semi-D), 50' x 25-50', low water (Sunset: regular water), 4-7' growing space (? or a lot more space - a park tree), root damage low (? or risk of root damage). See the mature Tipu trees in the Village Green park.
- **\*Pepper Tree** / *Schinus molle*, red color pepper corn clusters, weeping, E, 50' x 25-40', low water, 4-7' growing space.
- **\*Chitalpa** / *x Chitalpa tashkentensis*, a hybrid with lavender flower, D, 35' x 30', low water, 4-7' growing space.
- **\*Soapbark Tree** / *Quillaja saponaria*, yellow/cream flower, E, 45' x 15-25', low water, 4-7' growing space.

**PLANT THE RIGHT TREE IN THE RIGHT SPACE.** Research the tree size, growing space, water needs, moisture content, Sunset zone, proximity to structures and sidewalks, root structure, flowers, fall color, and so on.