



Photo by Peter Brastow

2021 Recommended Street Tree Species List

Introduction

Growing the urban forest canopy is a central goal of the San Francisco [Urban Forest Plan](#), and the approved street tree list provides easy to understand guidance on finding trees well-suited to our unique growing conditions. The San Francisco [Urban Forestry Council](#) periodically reviews and updates this list of trees in collaboration with public and non-profit urban forestry stakeholders, including San Francisco Public Works, Bureau of Urban Forestry and Friends of the Urban Forest. The 2021 Street Tree List was approved by the Urban Forestry Council on June 22, 2021.

This list is intended to be used for the public realm of streets and associated spaces and plazas that are generally under the jurisdiction of Public Works. While the focus is on the streetscape, e.g., tree wells in the public sidewalks, the list makes accommodations for other areas in the public realm, e.g., “Street Parks.” While this list recommends species that are known to do well in many locations in San Francisco, no tree is perfect for every potential tree planting location. This list should be used as a guideline for choosing which street tree to plant but should not be used without the help of an arborist or other tree professional. *All street tree site and species selections must be approved by Public Works before planting.*

Sections 1 and 2 of the list are focused on trees appropriate for sidewalk tree wells, and Section 3 is intended as a list of trees that have limited use cases and/or are being considered as street trees. New as of 2019, Section 4 is a list of local native tree and arborescent shrub species that are appropriate for sites in the public realm that have more space than the sidewalk planting wells, for example, stairways, “Street Parks,” plazas, and sidewalk gardens, though there are cases where these species are successful in the sidewalk tree wells. The local native species on List 4 provide optimum habitat for local wildlife. Finally, a table of palms is provided. While not broadly recommended, palms may be suitable in culturally sensitive sites or sites with significant growing constraints. The application form to plant a street tree can be found at <http://sfpublicworks.org/plant-street-tree>.

Biodiversity, Habitat and Climate Change

The City of San Francisco, like other cities around the world, has been accelerating its [actions and goal-setting](#) in relation to the interlinked crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. Climate change and biodiversity have figured prominently in Urban Forestry Council conversations, during which many people have advocated for planting local native trees and shrubs to support local [pollinators](#) and other wildlife, in order to stem the tide toward an impending global insect apocalypse. Street trees can play a role in climate mitigation and adaptation and in providing habitat for local wildlife. The 2021 approved tree list is part of the City’s larger [climate action strategy](#) and can contribute to creating a truly biodiverse San Francisco.

Opportunities for Greening and Supporting Wildlife in the City

In addition to [street trees](#), the City provides many other programs and opportunities for supporting biodiversity and climate resilience in the urban environment. Public Works manages the [Street Parks Program](#) and the [Sidewalk Landscaping Permit](#). Both of these programs hold great potential to install local native plants for wildlife and climate resilience. The [San Francisco Plant Finder](#) is a City website that provides recommended plant lists for bringing wildlife habitat into the urban environment. Consult sfenvironment.org/biodiversity as a portal to much more information about the city’s ecology and natural heritage.

For San Franciscans who have the opportunity – whether a front or backyard or other significant space - and are keenly interested in planting a tree for local wildlife habitat, the City strongly recommends planting coast live oak trees, California buckeyes and other local native species, taking care to use seeds or plants that are produced from local San Francisco stock. Consult the City’s [bee-friendly nurseries](#) page for sources of local native plants.

Section 1: Tree species, varieties, and cultivars that do well in most sidewalk locations in San Francisco.

Size	Evergreen/ Deciduous	Species	Common name	Notes
Large More than 35' tall at maturity	Evergreen	<i>Lagunaria patersonii</i>	primrose tree	Grows well in windy areas; pollinators.
		<i>Lophostemon confertus</i>	Brisbane box	Formerly <i>Tristania conferta</i> ; fast grower.
		<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i> 'Sam Sommers,' 'Majestic Beauty,' 'D.D. Blanchard'	southern magnolia	Proven success; pollinators.
Medium 20-35' tall at maturity	Evergreen	<i>Podocarpus gracilior</i> / <i>Afrocarpus falcatus</i>	fern pine	Slow rooter.
	Deciduous	<i>Quercus suber</i>	cork oak	Needs a large basin and wide sidewalk.
		<i>Platanus x acerifolia</i> 'Columbia'	London plane; sycamore	Prefers wind protection; susceptible to anthracnose and powdery mildew; observation needed.
		<i>Melaleuca quinquenervia</i>	broad-leaf paperbark	Grows fast, dense, irregular form; prefers wind protection; sensitive to cold.
		<i>Tristaniopsis laurina</i>	tristania; water gum	Standard species only. 'Elegant' variety NOT recommended. Formerly known as <i>Tristania laurina</i> ; slow grower – less than 6" annually; pollinators.
These trees are suitable for locations with overhead conflicts such as power lines.				
Small Less than 20' tall at maturity	Evergreen	<i>Callistemon citrinus</i>	lemon bottlebrush	Grows low; wide canopy and needs a wide sidewalk; sticky flowers; pollinators.
		<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i> 'Little Gem'	Little Gem magnolia	Proven success; pollinators.
	Deciduous	<i>Crataegus phaenopyrum</i>	Washington hawthorn	Subject to pests; has thorns; may be susceptible to fire blight; pollinators.

Section 2: Tree species, varieties, and cultivars that do well with certain special considerations as noted; may not be appropriate for planting broadly throughout San Francisco.

Size	Evergreen/ Deciduous	Species	Common Name	Notes
Large More than 35' tall at maturity	Evergreen	<i>Corymbia ficifolia</i>	red flowering gum	Needs a very large basin and wide sidewalk; drops large seed pods; pollinators.
		<i>Corymbia maculata/Eucalyptus m.</i>	spotted gum	Experimental, should do well in climate; lots of mature trees doing well now.
		<i>Hymenosporum flavum</i>	sweetshade	Uneven performer; prefers heat, wind protection, and good drainage; pollinators.
		<i>Lyonothamnus floribundus asplenifolius</i>	Catalina ironwood	CA Native. Prefers heat and wind protection; prone to transplant shock; very susceptible to phytophthora.
		<i>Metrosideros excelsa</i>	New Zealand Christmas tree	Needs a very large basin and very wide sidewalks; pollinators.
		<i>Quillaja saponaria</i>	Chilean soapbark	Availability improving; thrives everywhere; pollinators.
	Deciduous	<i>Ginkgo biloba</i> 'Princeton Sentry,' 'Saratoga'	ginkgo; maidenhair	Slow grower; prefers wind protection.
		<i>Ulmus parvifolia</i> 'Drake,'	Chinese elm	Fast grower; requires extensive pruning and maintenance.
Medium 20-35' tall at maturity	Evergreen	<i>Arbutus x 'Marina'</i>	strawberry tree	Fruit drop can range from low volume to significant. May be short lived; may need to be replanted in 20-25 years; pollinators.
		<i>Cassia leptophylla</i>	gold medallion tree	Semi-evergreen; requires extensive early maintenance.
		<i>Eriobotrya deflexa</i>	bronze loquat	Needs wind protection; does not perform well in sandy soils; susceptible to fire blight; pollinators.
		<i>Magnolia doltsopa</i>	sweet michelia	Formerly <i>Michelia doltsopa</i> ; uneven performer; grafted trees grows very slowly; prefers heat; needs wind protection; pollinators
		<i>Melaleuca linariifolia</i>	flax-leaf paperbark	Does well in SF.

		<i>Olea europaea</i>	fruitless olive	Needs a very large basin; prefers wind protection; Swan Hill and Wilsoni preferred; Cal-IPC Limited *
	Deciduous	<i>Jacaranda mimosifolia</i>	jacaranda	Uneven performer; prefers heat, wind protection, and good drainage; spring leaf drop.
		<i>Koelreuteria bipinnata</i>	Chinese flame tree	Structural failure concerns.
		<i>Pistacia chinensis</i> 'Keith Davey' or standard	Chinese pistache	Prefers heat and wind protection.

These trees are suitable for locations with overhead conflicts such as power lines.

Small Less than 20' tall at maturity	Evergreen		California lilac tree	<i>CA Native cultivar</i> . Not good for narrow sidewalks; pollinators.
		Ceanothus 'Ray Hartman'		
		<i>Laurus nobilis</i> 'Saratoga'	Saratoga bay laurel	Uneven performer; prefers heat; needs some wind protection; susceptible to pests.
		<i>Magnolia champaca</i> / <i>M. x alba</i>	champak	Formerly <i>Michelia champaca</i> ; needs wind protection; wide sidewalk; gets powdery mildew and very slow grower; pollinators
	<i>Pyrus kawakamii</i>	evergreen pear	Plant only in warmest areas of city. Semi-evergreen; leaf spot/fungus likely to occur and may cause premature leaf drop; does not flower well in our climate; susceptible to fire blight.	
	Deciduous	<i>Crataegus x lavalleyi</i>	Lavalle hawthorn	Appears to be less susceptible to fire blight and other pests compared to other <i>Crataegus</i> ; pollinators.

Section 3: Tree species, varieties, and cultivars with limited use cases and potential site restrictions as noted.

Size	Evergreen/ Deciduous	Species	Common Name	Notes
Large More than 35' tall at maturity	Evergreen	<i>Angophora costata</i>	Sydney red gum	
		<i>Brachychiton acerifolius</i>	flame tree	Semi-deciduous.
		<i>Corymbia citriodora</i>	Lemon-scented gum	
		<i>Eucalyptus nicholii</i>	willow-leaf peppermint	Experimental; should do well in SF climate.
		<i>Eucalyptus polyanthemos</i>	silver dollar gum	Needs a large basin; fast grower; high maintenance; drops limbs; pollinators.
		<i>Geijera parviflora</i>	Australian willow	Prefers heat and needs wind protection; pollinators.
		<i>Leucadendron argenteum</i>	Silver leaf tree	Needs a large basin and no overhead lines.
		<i>Pittosporum undulatum</i>	Victorian box	Self-sows! Do not plant near natural areas or other open spaces; caution, in decline, requires further study, currently recommend planting in full shade; Cal-IPC Watch *
		Quercus agrifolia	coast live oak	<i>SF Native</i> . Typically requires large sidewalk/basin to facilitate full potential and crown development; 41 lepidoptera confirmed, 122 likely, birds
		<i>Quercus ilex</i>	holly oak	Needs wind protection; sidewalk space; gets powdery mildew.
		<i>Quercus tomentella</i>	island oak	<i>CA Native</i> . Availability improving; 1 confirmed, 30 likely, birds
	<i>Quercus virginiana</i>	southern live oak	Continue to test; doing well so far.	
	Quercus wislizeni	Interior live oak	<i>Bay Area Native</i>	
	Deciduous	<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>	tulip tree	Uneven performer; susceptible to aphids followed by sooty mold; requires summer water.
Platanus racemosa 'Roberts'		California sycamore (Roberts)	<i>CA Native</i> . Large basin and wide sidewalk; 3 lepidoptera confirmed, 8 likely, birds	
<i>Quercus coccinea</i>		scarlet oak	Experimental.	
<i>Quercus frainetto</i> 'Forest Green'		Italian oak	Availability improving; more testing needed.	

		<i>Quercus phellos</i>	willow oak	More performance testing needed; requires summer water.
		<i>Tilia tomentosa</i>	silver linden	Performance testing needed.
		<i>Ulmus parvifolia x carpinifolia</i> 'Frontier'	frontier elm	More performance testing needed.
		<i>Ulmus propinqua</i> 'Emerald Sunshine'	emerald sunshine elm	More performance testing needed.
		<i>Ulmus wilsoniana</i> 'Prospector'	prospector elm	More performance testing needed.
		<i>Ulmus japonica x wilsoniana</i> 'Accolade'	accolade elm	More performance testing needed.
Medium 20-35' tall at maturity	Evergreen	<i>Agonis flexuosa</i> 'Burgundy'	Burgundy peppermint willow	Better form and structure than other dark-leaf cultivars; fast grower.
		<i>Banksia integrifolia</i>	coast banksia	Requires extensive early maintenance.
		<i>Brachychiton populneus</i>	bottle tree	Prefers heat and wind protection; needs a large basin due to thick trunk.
		<i>Cedrela fissilis</i>	Brazilian cedarwood	Good results so far and needs more time; do not plant under powerlines.
		<i>Ceiba speciosa</i>	silk floss tree	Prefers heat, wind protection, large basins.
		<i>Melaleuca ericifolia</i>	swamp paperbark	Not often planted, but most look good.
		<i>Melaleuca squamophloia</i>	scaly paperbark	Not often planted but should do well.
		<i>Melaleuca styphelioides</i>	prickly-leaf paperbark	Can root poorly; prickly leaves.
		<i>Metrosideros collina</i> 'Springfire'	'ohi'a lehua	
		<i>Pittosporum rhombifolium/</i> <i>Auranticarpa rhombifolia</i>	Queensland pittosporum	Use in warmer parts of the city.
		<i>Quercus engelmannii</i>	Engelmann oak	CA Native (extreme south)
	<i>Quercus hypoleucooides</i>	Silverleaf oak	Native to Sonoran desert biome.	
	<i>Quercus rugosa</i>	Netleaf oak	Native to Mexico.	
	Deciduous	<i>Acer buergerianum</i>	trident maple	Prefers heat, wind protection, and needs summer water.
<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>		horse chestnut	Not clear if successful in SF yet; needs summer water.	
<i>Aesculus x carnea</i>		red horse chestnut	Gets windburn easily in summer even in protected sites; early deciduous; climate concerns; needs summer water; pollinators.	

		<i>Celtis sinensis</i>	Chinese hackberry	Prefers heat and needs wind protection; uneven performer; gets pests.
		<i>Corylus colurna</i>	Turkish hazel	Not clear if successful in SF yet.
		<i>Koelreuteria elegans ssp. formosana</i>	Chinese flame tree	Semi-deciduous.
These trees are suitable for locations with overhead conflicts such as power lines.				
Small - Less than 20' tall at maturity	Evergreen	<i>Ceanothus</i> 'Cliff Schmidt'; <i>Ceanothus arboreus</i>	California lilac tree	CA Native cultivar. Additional cultivar and standard species (currently only planting 'Ray Hartman'); insects
		<i>Elaeocarpus decipiens</i>	Japanese blueberry	Slow growing; keep out of strong/prevaling wind; flowers but may not produce fruit at maturity.
		<i>Eucalyptus conferruminata/E. lehmanni</i>	bushy yate	Wide canopy; large space needed; pollinators.
		<i>Heteromeles arbutifolia</i>	Toyon, Christmas berry	SF Native. Local native, train early for tree form; great for sidewalk landscaping; 4 lepidoptera confirmed, 4 likely, birds
		<i>Prunus lyonii</i>	Catalina cherry	CA Native. Fruit drop may get messy; pollinators
	Deciduous	<i>Acer circinatum</i>	Vine maple	CA Native; 10 lepidoptera confirmed, 55 likely
		<i>Prunus subhirtella</i> 'Autumnalis'	Higan cherry	Tolerates mild winters better than other flowering cherry species.

Section 4: Local Natives - these are tree and arborescent shrub species that are appropriate for the public realm, including stairways, plazas and “Street Parks,” as well as sidewalk gardens and wider sidewalks with large cut-outs.

Local native trees and shrubs are optimum for providing wildlife habitat throughout the city.

Evergreen/ Deciduous	Species	Common Name	Notes
Evergreen	<i>Ceanothus thyrsiflorus</i>	California lilac	Grows quickly in the right conditions; 14 lepidoptera confirmed, 79 likely, birds and bees
	<i>Garrya elliptica</i>	Silk tassel	Lyrical, hanging flowers
	<i>Heteromeles arbutifolia</i>	Toyon	Beautiful red berries in late fall; 4 lepidoptera confirmed, 4 likely, birds and bees
	<i>Myrica (Morella) californica</i>	California wax myrtle	Beautiful as a hedge or specimen tree; needs a moist site; 22 lepidoptera likely
	<i>Prunus ilicifolia</i>	Holly-leaved cherry	Spectacular indigenous occurrence at the top of Bayview Hill; 4 lepidoptera confirmed, 140 likely, birds and bees
	<i>Rhamnus (Frangula) californica</i>	California coffeeberry	Widely planted for attractive evergreen leaves; 10 lepidoptera confirmed, 23 likely, birds and bees
	<i>Quercus agrifolia</i>	Coast live oak	San Francisco’s most common native tree species; Landmark tree at 23 rd and Castro; 41 lepidoptera confirmed, 122 likely, birds and bees
	<i>Quercus chrysolepis</i>	Canyon live oak	Unusual indigenous occurrence at Lake Merced; 14 lepidoptera confirmed, 165 likely, birds and bees
Deciduous	<i>Aesculus californica</i>	California buckeye	Landmark tree at 22 nd and Pennsylvania, McAllister and North Willard, and other locations; 2 lepidoptera confirmed, 11 likely
	<i>Sambucus cerulea</i>	Blue elderberry	Landmark tree near Folsom Street at Bernal Heights Boulevard; 23 lepidoptera likely, birds and bees

Information in the Notes column regarding pollinators and lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) is from the [Urban Forest Ecosystems Institute](#) website, the [Yerba Buena Chapter](#) of the California Native Plant Society, the National Wildlife Federation and the [Calscape](#) website.

Palms: These provide fewer community benefits such as shade and carbon sequestration but may be suitable given site constraints.			
Small	<i>Butia odorata</i>	southern jelly palm	Does well in many SF climates.
	<i>Cordyline australis</i>	Cabbage tree	Needs very large basin; do not plant near natural areas.
Medium	<i>Archontophoenix cunninghamiana</i>	king palm	Needs wind protection and water.
	<i>Brahea clara</i>	Mexican blue palm	Does well in many SF climates.
	<i>Brahea edulis</i>	Guadalupe palm	Needs a large basin.
	<i>Howea forsteriana</i>	Kentia palm	Does well in many SF climates.
	<i>Parajubaea sunkha</i>	Sunkha palm	Does well in many SF climates.
	<i>Phoenix dactylifera</i> 'Medjool' or 'Zahidi'	date palm	Needs a large basin and wide sidewalk.
	<i>Syagrus romanzoffiana</i>	queen palm	Needs heat, wind protection.
	<i>Trachycarpus fortunei</i> , standard & 'Wagnerianus'	Chinese windmill palm	Does well in many SF climates.
Large	<i>Parajubaea torallyi</i>	Bolivian mountain coconut palm	NEW: does well in many SF climates; big
	<i>Washingtonia robusta</i>	Mexican fan palm	Prefers some warmth; Cal-IPC Moderate*

Selected Resources

Bee-Friendly Nurseries

<https://sfenvironment.org/plant-nurseries-bee-friendly>

California Native Plant Society, Yerba Buena Chapter

<http://cnps-yerbabuena.org/>

California Native Plant Society, Calscape

<https://calscape.org/>

City Trees

<https://sfenvironment.org/city-trees>

Friends of the Urban Forest

<https://www.fuf.net/>

Green Connections

<https://sfplanning.org/project/green-connections?page=3002>

iNaturalist

<https://www.inaturalist.org/home>

Local Plant Nurseries

<http://sfplantfinder.org/resources.html#plant-nurseries>

Park Forestry Improvement Program

<https://sfrecpark.org/park-improvements/2008-clean-safe-bond/park-forestry-program/>

SF Pollinators Portal

<https://sfenvironment.org/pollinators>

Recreation and Open Space Element

<http://openspace.sfplanning.org/>

Right Tree, Right Place

<https://www.pge.com/righttreerightplace/>

San Francisco Plant Finder

<http://sfplantfinder.org/>

San Francisco Trees

<http://www.sftrees.com/>

Sidewalk Landscaping

<http://sfpublicworks.org/services/permits/sidewalk-landscaping>

Street Parks Program

<http://sfpublicworks.org/streetparks>

Street Trees and Plants

<http://www.sfpublicworks.org/trees>

StreetTreeSF

<https://sfpublicworks.org/streettreesf>

Urban Forest Master Plan

<https://sfplanning.org/urban-forest-plan?page=3166>

Urban Forestry Council

<https://sfenvironment.org/about/taskforce/urban-forestry-council>

Urban Forest Ecosystems Institute

<https://ufe.calpoly.edu/>

USA North

<https://usanorth811.org>

Acknowledgements

California Native Plant Society; Flora Grubb Gardens; Friends of the Urban Forest; Mike Sullivan, author of Trees of San Francisco; San Francisco Recreation and Parks; San Francisco Public Works, Bureau of Urban Forestry; San Francisco Environment.



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**