

TEN COMMON MYTHS OF TREES



✓ MYTH# 1 Topping Trees is an acceptable pruning practice

Almost Never: Neither is “lacing”. Although orchard trees may be crown-thinned heavily to enable easier fruit harvest, this does create annual maintenance pruning - assumed by the grower. **DO NOT TOP YOUR TREES!**

✓ MYTH# 2 Buy the largest nursery tree you can afford

It is much wiser to purchase as small a specimen tree as you can, as it will grow faster and be healthier in the long run, and will catch up to larger nursery specimens quite quickly. Larger pots tend to have excessive circling roots.

✓ MYTH# 3 Planting trees in deep round holes, helps create a “tap root”

Deep holes can actually kill a tree by burying the root crown and causing root rot. Instead, dig as wide a hole as possible, and plant only as deep as soil in the root ball. Round holes in compacted soil encourage circling roots, while roots may penetrate through the corners of square holes. Most deep “tap roots” eventually die from lack of oxygen.

✓ MYTH# 4 Amend the soil well - when planting a tree

Amending tree soil is like planting your tree in a pot. Healthy tree roots need to grow out and away from a planting hole, no matter how poor the native soil. To encourage this, scuff up the sides of a square hole, and replace only the excavated soil. Do provide 3”-4” inches of mulch around the surface after planting, leaving a 4” gap at the trunk.

✓ MYTH# 5 Trees need lots of water, especially applied near the trunk

Trees use little water compared to their size. They catch or deflect up to 30% of rainfall in their canopies, and up to 30% more can be absorbed by their roots. This process reduces storm-water runoff and erosion. When you water a tree, the trunk should stay dry while the feeder roots need deep watering to penetrate down 18” - 36”. Mature trees may seem to survive without added irrigation, but supplementing low rainfall is essential during drought years.

✓ MYTH# 6 Evergreen trees don’t lose their leaves

Deciduous trees lose all their leaves once a year (typically in fall, but in San Diego this can vary); evergreen trees generally lose them ALL YEAR. They both have their virtues. Do not choose an evergreen tree for its lack of litter.

✓ MYTH# 7 Stakes keep trees strong and straight

A young, healthy tree should not need staking. Poor nursery practices sometimes forces us to stake them later. Small container trees seldom need shoring, but if you must temporarily add support, remove any central nursery stake immediately before planting; then use two supplementary stakes and remove them within a year.

✓ MYTH# 8 Trees need to be pruned regularly

Pruning trees during the first three years for structural integrity will reduce the need for corrective pruning later on. If older limbs are dead, diseased, deformed or damaged, they should also be pruned, but otherwise prune sparingly. Many fruit trees respond to dormant pruning to encourage more fruit production, but avoid random cutting.

✓ MYTH# 9 Trees need regular fertilizer

Trees get 90% of their energy from the sun, but only 10% from soil. Organic mulches (like tree leaves) are essential natural feeding systems for soil. Fruit trees may benefit from macro or micro-nutrients, but don’t feed an ailing tree.

✓ MYTH# 10 Fruitless Trees reduce nuisance to the homeowner

Fruitless trees frequently have abundant male flowers, which add massive amounts of wind-blown pollen instead of fruit. Beware of this seldom revealed fact if you have allergies. Know your variety before planting!



TREES MAKE CENTS

Urban Forestry Advice, Resources & Helpful links



Tree ID, selection, and pest and disease resources:

- UCCE San Diego Master Gardeners online and **live help**: <http://www.mastergardenerssandiego.org/>
- **UFEI** - Urban Forest Ecosystem Institute: <http://ufei.calpoly.edu/> *very helpful website - Cal-Poly SLO*
 - [SelecTree](#): Users can key in attributes like Sunset Zone, size, bloom color - and see results
 - [ForesTree](#) ID – Cal Poly CA – native tree key and pest and disease analysis
 - **Urban Tree Key** <http://www.urbantreekey.org/> >100 ornamental CA trees identifications
- USDA links & **Plant Interactive ID** Keys: <http://plants.usda.gov/java/>
- UC Davis - **Integrated Pest Management** (IPM) help and ID: <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/>
- **Arbor Day Foundation** – What tree is that? <http://www.arborday.org/trees/whattree/>
- Lucid & USDA **Palm Facts and Identification**: <http://idtools.org/id/palms/palmid/>

Choosing home orchard fruit varieties, planting and growing advice:

- Univ. of CA – **The California Backyard Orchard** website (a tremendous resource for all types of info) http://homeorchard.ucanr.edu/The_Big_Picture/Tree_Selection/
- Dave Wilson Nursery: (does not sell to public; provides education) <http://www.davewilson.com/>
 - ROOTSTOCKS, “How To” videos, Monthly Fruit Harvest Chart (downloadable)
 - Backyard Orchard Cultivars
- The Home Orchard: Growing Deciduous Fruit and Nut Trees (book) **UC ANR. Publication 3485**
- Bay Laurel Nursery (Atascadero, CA) – online bare root catalog: <http://www.baylaurelnursery.com/>
(This is a good resource for Southern California [low-chill](#) fruit tree species) ***purchase locally whenever possible**

Organizations that address Arboriculture and Urban Forestry management:

- **One of the best all-around resources**: UC California Garden Web <http://cagardenweb.ucdavis.edu/>
- US Forest Service: Pacific Southwest Research Station: <http://www.fs.fed.us/psw/programs/uesd/uep/>
- International Society of Arboriculture - ISA: <http://www.isa-arbor.com/> (see also [WCISA](#))
 - **Find** an ISA Certified Arborist: <http://www.treesaregood.org/findanarborist/arboristsearch.aspx>
 - **Check** a California Landscape Contractors license at the [CA Contractors State License Board](#)
- San Diego - **Professional Tree Care Association**: <http://www.ptcasandiego.org/>
- **California Rare Fruit Growers** (CRFG) (local and state chapters): <http://www.crfg.org/>
- San Diego **Regional Urban Forest Council** (SDRUFC): <http://www.caufc.org/sdrufc>
- CaUFC – California Urban Forest Council: <http://www.caufc.org> (statewide resources)
- I-TREE Tools: <http://www.itreetools.org/> (ecosystem analysis; FREE open source applications)
- Urban Forests Management Plan Toolkit: <http://ufmptoolkit.com/>
- Los Angeles Tree Ecosystem Map (Tree Map LA) - <https://www.opentreemap.org/latreemap/>
- Tree San Diego (fledgling tree non-profit) www.treesandiego.org