



**Blue Oak**  
*Quercus douglasii*

Blue oaks are somewhat slow growing and prefer a very dry climate. Their dull blue-green foliage has a protective waxy coating to prevent too much moisture loss during the summer months, plus they may shed some leaves to help reduce stress.

Blue oaks can live to be 200 or 300 years old. They can grow in many types of soil, and usually mature at about 65 feet, reproducing by means of elongated acorns wearing shallow, warty caps.

One dubious distinction of blue oaks is that they are hosts to a wide array of galls. Galls are tumor-like growths which are stimulated by a tiny wasp larva. The larvae eventually pupate, burrow out and fly away, leaving the stems and leaves pocked with unusual shapes and colored red, pink, orange or yellow.



**California Buckeye**  
*Aesculus californica*

This beautiful deciduous tree welcomes spring with its showy spikes of white flowers, which outline its crown like a candelabra. Nectar from these flowers is toxic to bees, and all the other parts of the buckeye are toxic to wildlife.

To avoid the heat of summer, this drought-tolerant tree sheds some of its leaves during the hottest months, and allows the rest to wither and turn brown. Meanwhile, the flowers have formed into smooth brown pods and by autumn they encase distinctive glossy nuts.

Typical buckeye trees mature to a height of about 12-30 feet and live to be more than 110 years old.

## NATIVE TREES

Life forms of all kinds depend on trees for food, shelter, health and growth. Our planet as a whole benefits from the photosynthetic process in which the trees release oxygen back in our atmosphere, after using carbon dioxide and water to accomplish this complex conversion. Think of this vital energy while you look for some of these easily identifiable trees while you hike.



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**California Sycamore**  
*Platanus racemosa*

Distinctive bark on the long-lived sycamore is boldly mottled with white, gray, light green and brown patches. Its wide crown provides plentiful shade and it may grow to be 100 feet tall during its lifespan of over 150 years. These trees have shallow roots, and prefer moist sandy soil, often in riparian woodlands. Its flowers mature into spherical clusters on a long stalk, maturing over the winter, and then breaking apart releasing seeds early in the spring.



## California Black Walnut

*Juglans californica*

Rich and oily nuts from this native tree are often consumed by rodents and certain birds, such as crows and ravens. The nuts are hard to crack, often being pulverized along with the shell. For this reason, only the rootstock is used commercially for grafting English walnut sprouts for producing more palatable nuts for humans. Wood from the Black Walnut is used for fine quality lumber and woodworking.

Black Walnut typically lives to be nearly 100 years old, reaching a height of about 50 feet. It has a deep taproot, and prefers moist soil, either alluvial or clay. It usually grows near creek beds or canyons, and also in riparian woodlands.



## Valley Oak

*Quercus lobata*

This mighty oak can grow to reach 80-100 feet—the largest oak in the U.S.—and it has a lifespan of nearly 300 years. It is deciduous, with dark glossy leaves, about 4 inches by 2 inches, with acorns long and slender; 2 inches by 0.8 inches. Its trunk is often short and broad, supporting its massive, spreading canopy. For this reason, more birds are found in its habitat than in any others, and the Valley Oak habitat is critically important to the survival of many endangered and threatened species.

The Valley Oak prefers an inland climate in river valleys, foothills, and flatlands. It was once widespread in the California Central Valley, before the dominance of agricultural development.

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## Coast Live Oak

*Quercus agrifolia*

Coast Live Oak trees are one of the most common native trees in our area. Evergreen leaves, convex in shape, and dark gray bark with irregular cracks and fissures, help to distinguish this shade tolerant oak, for which the city of Oakland was named.

At maturity this oak can reach heights of 30 to 80 feet. Its canopy is very broad, nearly 110 feet wide with a trunk 12 feet in circumference, giving it a majestic presence. Coast Live Oaks are very long-lived, sometimes living to more than 250 years.

They provide important habitat for many species of wildlife. Their acorns usually ripen between October and November, providing food for birds, deer, rodents, and many other animals.

On a sadder note, thousands of Coast Live Oaks have died since the 1990s as a result of devastation from a bark-invading fungus of the genus *Phytophthora*.