



## SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

### Green Paper: Trees on front lines of fight against climate change

Prepared by the Sustainability Advisory Committee

Trees play a critical role in combating climate change as they can sequester large amounts of greenhouse gas emissions and provide for cooler temperatures. While long recognized for its urban forest—with its distinctive native Torrey pines—Del Mar’s tree canopy has thinned over the last few decades. Many protected Torrey pines have been removed due to perceived safety concerns and to enhance ocean views. A number of trees have also succumbed to drought, extreme weather conditions, and bark beetles.

Del Mar’s Climate Action Plan<sup>1</sup> is “a living document designed to protect our natural resources, prevent harm to the natural environment, enhance human health, and improve the social and economic well-being of the community for current and future generations.” It establishes several measures intended to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs). Preserving and growing Del Mar’s urban forest has been identified as one of the five top priorities for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the City’s Climate Action Plan ([see Reduction Measures, chapter 2, p. 25](#)).

Del Mar residents can play an important role in preserving our urban forest by taking proper care of their trees. Your trees may benefit from having their crowns laced out every few years during the winter months. This keeps large trees from getting top heavy, and it also helps in removing deadwood. Overwatering is also a concern—especially with Torrey pines—and can lead to root rot and unstable root systems. When this happens, trees and tree branches can topple during harsh winds and storms, endangering nearby structures and people. Topping or hat-racking is also detrimental to tree health, as is the removal of side branches which render a tree lopsided and unstable. Arborists also discourage pruning more than 25% of a tree’s canopy at any given time, as this can be highly stressful and destabilizing. You can review the [Tree Maintenance Guidelines](#) in the Del Mar’s Tree Policy Manual (section 2, pp.11-18 and Appendix E)

When it is necessary to remove trees and new trees can’t be replanted elsewhere on the homeowner’s property, the City Planning Department collects fees that are deposited into a mitigation fund<sup>2</sup>. According to the Residents Guide to Del Mar Tree

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.delmar.ca.us/699/Climate-Action-Plan>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.delmar.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/2452/A-Resident-Guide-to-the-Del-Mar-Tree-Ordinance-PDF?bidId=>

Ordinance, the mitigation funds are used to pay for the planting of trees elsewhere in the City or any other Community Forest-related need deemed appropriate by resolution of the City Council (educational materials, etc.).

Other mature, unprotected trees also contribute to cooler temperatures and carbon sequestration. For guidance on tree selection and care, please consult Del Mar's Tree Policy Manual<sup>3</sup>.

Other drought tolerant trees suitable for Del Mar are listed below. A longer list is included in the Public Tree Manual ([appendix B](#)). The majority of these trees are native species, which means they are sustainable and well adapted to our climate and save water and provide habitat for pollinators and other wildlife:

- Arbutus Unedo (Strawberry Tree), 15-40 ft.
- Cercis Occidentalis (Western Redbud), 15-25 ft.
- Koelreuteria Bipinnata, (Chinese Flame Tree), 15-30 ft.
- Podocarpus Gracilior (Fern Pine), 40 ft.
- Psidium Cattleinum (Strawberry Guava), 10-15 ft.
- Quercus Agrifolia (Coast Live Oak), 40 ft.+
- Prunus Lyonii (Catalina Cherry), 15-40 ft.
- Schinus Molle (California Pepper), 25-40 ft.

Discouraged trees include Acacia, Elderberry, Flaxleaf Paperbark, Oleander, Silk Oak, and Sweet Bay.

For questions about Torrey Pines and Monterey Cypress—Del Mar's protected trees—please view the [Resident's Guide to the Del Mar Tree Ordinance](#).

For questions about Del Mar's tree removal and replacement ratios, please view [Chapter 23.50.090](#) of the Municipal Code.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.delmar.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/264/Public-Tree-Policy-Manual?bidId=>