

Friends of the Urban Forest Adopt-A-Yard-Tree Program

Tree Selection Guide 2023

Thank you for your interest in planting trees!

This year, we're offering 13 different tree species — [7 California native trees](#) and [6 fruit trees](#) well-adapted to San Francisco's unique climate. They're all listed below, followed by pictures and a description of each tree.

Note: Species will be available at Adopt-A-Yard-Tree events on a first-come, first-served basis. This list is not updated as inventory changes.



California Native Species

Common & Scientific Name	Mature Size	Mature Height (H) & Spread (S)	Soil Type	Tolerates shady conditions	Watering Needs	Evergreen or Deciduous	Comments
California buckeye <i>Aesculus californica</i>	Small	H: 25 ft S: 20-30 ft	Loam or Sand or Clay	Yes	Low	Deciduous	Atypically deciduous: loses leaves June-Feb. All parts are toxic if ingested (unless you're a squirrel); pollen is toxic to non-native bees. Beautiful spring flowers and winter silhouette. <i>Common pests: bark beetles, caterpillars</i>
California lilac <i>Ceanothus 'Ray Hartman'</i>	Small	H: 20 ft S: 15-20 ft	Loam or Sand	Yes	Low	Evergreen	Produces stunning blue flowers in the winter and spring. Does not like too much summer water once established, so plant well out of reach of sprinklers and water by hose only through the first dry season. Prune after flowers have faded.
Toyon <i>Heteromeles arbutifolia</i>	Small	H: 25 ft S: 8-15 ft	Loam or Sand or Clay	Yes	Low	Evergreen	Also known as "California Holly." Beautiful summer flowers and red berries in the fall and winter. Do not eat the fruit, as it is potentially harmful. <i>Common pests: scales and thrips</i>
Pacific wax myrtle <i>Morella californica</i>	Medium	H: 30 ft S: 10-30 ft	Loam or Sand or Clay	Yes	Low to Medium	Evergreen	This tree tolerates salt spray and wind. Its small gray or purple berry is not edible. <i>Common pests: scales, thrips, spider mites, and white flies</i>
Hollyleaf cherry <i>Prunus ilicifolia</i>	Small	H: 30 ft S: 10-25 ft	Loam or Sand or Clay	Yes	Low	Evergreen	The fruit is purple or red drupe. The pits of the fruit are toxic and should not be ingested. Susceptible to root rot if over-watered. <i>Common pests: white flies</i>
California coast live oak <i>Quercus agrifolia</i>	Large	H: 70 ft S: 20-70 ft	Loam or Sand or Clay	Yes	Low	Evergreen	Iconic Bay Area tree with large, spreading canopy. <i>Susceptible 'Sudden Oak Death' disease, indicated by a canker on the tree.</i>
Blue elderberry <i>Sambucus nigra ssp. caerulea</i>	Small	H: 20 ft S: 10-20 ft	Loam or Sand or Clay	Yes	Low to Medium	Deciduous	It has cream-colored flowers in the spring and purple berries in the fall that are edible when ripe. Attracts birds. <i>Common pests: bean aphids, scales, elder borers</i>

Non-native Fruit Species

Common & Scientific Name	Mature Size	Mature Height (H) & Spread (S)	Soil Type	Tolerates shady conditions	Watering Needs	Evergreen or Deciduous	Comments
Brown Turkey (Common Fig) <i>Ficus carica</i>	Small	H: 30 ft S: 10-20 ft	Loam or Sand or Clay	Yes	Medium	Deciduous	Usually produces two fruit crops per year - one in late spring and another in later summer. The ripe fruit is sweet with brownish-purple skin and amber-colored flesh. Fruit is edible right off of the plant. <i>Common pests: spider mites, june beetles</i>
Fuji/ Gala <i>Malus</i>	Small	H: 12-15 ft S: 12-15 ft	Loam or Sand or Clay	No	Medium	Deciduous	Beautiful white flowers in early spring. Ripe apples in early fall. Prune the apple tree every year to get the best crop. Fruit is edible right off of the plant. <i>Common pests: aphids</i>
Hass Avocado <i>Persea americana</i> 'Hass'	Large	H: 40 ft S: 25-35 ft	Loam or Sand	No	Medium	Evergreen	Cross pollination increases the fruit crop (pollinators are great for this fruit's success). It fruits in Fall, Spring, or Summer. Fruit is edible right off of the plant. <i>Common pests: avocado mites, avocado thrips, persea mites, mealybugs</i>
Japanese Loquat <i>Eriobotrya japonica</i>	Medium	H:30 ft S:15-30 ft	Loam or Sand or Clay	Yes	Medium	Evergreen	Fragrant Fall-blooming flowers. Orange/yellow fruits in the Spring or Summer. Fruit is edible right off of the plant. <i>Common pests: aphids, scales, fruit flies, caterpillars</i>
Mission Olive <i>Olea Europaea</i> 'Mission'	Medium	H: 30 ft S: 25-30 ft	Loam or Sand or Clay	No	Low	Evergreen	Beautiful ornamental tree with silver-green leaves. Olive fruits are edible if prepared properly - can be cured to eat at the table or pressed to make olive oil. <i>Common pests: scales, mealybugs, and white flies</i>
Japanese Plum <i>Prunus salicina</i> 'Santa Rosa'	Medium	H: 30 ft S: 15-20 ft	Loam or Sand or Clay	No	Medium	Deciduous	Beautiful white flowers in early spring. Fruits in the Spring or Summer. The fruit is either red, purple, yellow, or green. Fruit is edible right off of the plant.

California Buckeye

Aesculus californica



Sun exposure: Partial shade to full sun



Watering needs: Low



Height: 25 ft



Spread: 20-30 ft



Tree Size: Small

Growth Rate: ~24 in/year

Character: Deciduous, rounded



Native



Key Features

Flowers:

- Pinkish-White bloom
- Flower in April, May and June

Seeds:

- Poisonous
- Known as "buckeye nuts"



Blue elderberry

Sambucus nigra ssp. Cerulea



Sun exposure: Full, partial, or full shade



Watering needs: Medium to low



Height: 20 ft



Spread: 10-20 ft



Tree Size: Small

Growth Rate: ~36 in/year

Character: Deciduous, rounded



Native



Key Features:

Flowers:

- Showy
- Cream/white
- Flowers in spring/summer

Fruit:

- Small black/ blueberry
- Fall or summer
- Edible



California Coast live oak

Quercus Agrifolia



Sun exposure: Full sun, partial shade



Watering needs: Low



Height: 70 ft



Spread: 20-70 ft



Tree Size: Large

Growth Rate: ~24 in/year

Character: Evergreen, rounded



Native



Key Features:

Flowers:

-Inconspicuous

Fruit:

-Large brown acorn

-Edible if prepared



California lilac (Ray Hartman)

Ceanothus



Sun exposure: Full sun, partial sun



Watering needs: Low



Height: 20 ft



Spread: 15-20 ft



Tree Size: Small

Growth Rate: ~24-36 in/year

Character: Evergreen, rounded



Native



Key Features:

Flowers:

- Showy, fragrant, blue
- Bloom in Spring

Fruit:

- Small, black, purple capsule
- Fruit in winter or summer
- Edible if prepared



Hollyleaf Cherry

Prunus ilicifolia



Sun exposure: Full sun



Watering needs: Low



Height: 30 ft max



Spread: 10-25 ft



Tree Size: Small

Growth Rate: ~24 in/year

Character: Evergreen, rounded



Native

Key Features:

Flowers:

- Showy; cream or white
- Flower in Spring



Fruit:

- Medium purple or red drupe
- Fruit in Summer
- Pits are toxic—do not ingest



Pacific Wax Myrtle

Morella Californica



Sun exposure: Full sun



Watering needs: Medium to low



Height: 30 ft max



Spread: 10-30 ft



Tree Size: Medium

Growth Rate: ~24 in/year

Character: Evergreen, rounded/conical



Native



Key Features:

Flowers:

- Inconspicuous
- Purple/red/yellow colors
- Flower in Spring



Fruit:

- Small gray or purple berry
- Fruit in Fall
- Edible but strong taste



Toyon

Heteromeles arbutifolia



Sun exposure: Partial shade to full sun



Watering needs: Low



Height: 25 ft



Spread: 8-15 ft



Tree Size: Small

Growth Rate: ~12-24 in/year

Character: Evergreen, rounded/vase



Native



Key Features:

Flowers:

- Showy
- White
- Flowers in summer



Fruit:

- Red Berry
- Fall or Winter
- Not recommended to eat



Brown Turkey (Common Fig)

Ficus carica



Sun exposure: Partial shade to full sun



Watering needs: Medium



Height: 30 ft



Spread: 10-20 ft



Tree Size: Small

Growth Rate: ~36 in/year

Character: Deciduous, rounded/vase



Key Features:

Flowers:

- Inconspicuous, fragrant
- Bloom in Winter/Spring



Fruit:

- Brownish-purple skin
- Late Spring or Late Summer
- Edible



Fuji / Gala Apple

Malus



Sun exposure: Full sun



Watering needs: Medium



Height: 12-15 ft



Spread: 12-15 ft



Tree Size: Small

Growth Rate: ~13-24 in/year

Character: Deciduous; rounded, upright



Key Features:

Flowers:

- Fragrant, white flowers
- Bloom in mid/late Spring

Fruit:

- Red fruit (apple)
- Fruit in early Fall
- Edible



Hass avocado

Persea americana 'Hass'



Sun exposure: Full sun



Watering needs: Medium



Height: 40 ft



Spread: 25-35 ft



Tree Size: Large

Growth Rate: ~36 in/year

Character: Evergreen, rounded



Key Features:

Flowers:

- Inconspicuous
- Yellow
- Flowers in Winter

Fruit:

- Large black or purple berry
- Fall, Spring, Summer
- Edible



Japanese Loquat

Eriobotrya japonica



Sun exposure: Partial shade to full sun



Watering needs: Medium



Height: 30 ft



Spread: 15-30 ft



Tree Size: Medium

Growth Rate: ~36 in/year

Character: Evergreen, rounded/vase



Key Features:

Flowers:

- Showy and fragrant
- White
- Flowers in Fall



Fruit:

- Large orange/yellow pome
- Spring/Summer
- Edible



Mission Olive

Olea Europaea 'Mission'



Sun exposure: Full sun



Watering needs: Low



Height: 30 ft



Spread: 25-30 ft



Tree Size: Medium/Large

Growth Rate: ~12 in/year

Character: Evergreen, rounded



Key Features:

Flowers:

- Inconspicuous and fragrant
- Flowers in Spring



Fruit:

- Medium or black purple drupe
- Fruit in Fall
- Edible



Japanese Plum

Prunus salicina 'Santa Rosa'



Sun exposure: Full sun



Watering needs: Medium



Height: 30 ft



Spread: 15-20 ft



Tree Size: Medium

Growth Rate: ~36 in/year

Character: Deciduous, rounded



Key Features:

Flowers:

- Showy/white
- Flowers in Spring



Fruit:

- Large to very large purple, red, yellow, or green drupe
- Spring or summer
- Edible



References and Resources

FUF Urban Tree Species Directory

<https://www.friendsoftheurbanforest.org/urban-tree-species>

SelectTree

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

California Native Plant Society CalScape

<https://calscape.org/>

Gardenia

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

Glossary

Deciduous — A tree or shrub that sheds its leaves annually

Evergreen — A plant that retains green leaves throughout the year

Root rot — A disease that attacks the roots of trees that grow in wet or damp soil

Sudden Oak Death — A tree disease caused by a fungus-like plant pathogen. It kills most oak trees.

