

## CHICO'S HERITAGE TREE PROGRAM

In March of 2010, after two years of sub-committee meetings and review, the Chico City Council approved several revisions in the Municipal Code relating to trees. This revision included setting up a Voluntary Heritage Tree Program (CMC Section 16.68.010) to recognize significant trees growing in Chico. On November 2, the City Council approved the first 6 Heritage trees. Three of those trees are located in Chico's Parks and Open Space. Another is a City street tree, and the final one was a private tree in a new development across from the Nature Center. Subsequently, 2 trees were nominated by CARD and approved for Heritage Tree Status on 12/21/10. The first private tree, a valley oak located on East 8<sup>th</sup> St, was nominated and approved in April, 2012. A street tree was nominated by its adjacent homeowner in January, 2013. These trees are described below. The City's program is active and seeking new Heritage Tree Applications.

**A 67" valley oak (*Quercus lobata*)** tree in Annie's Glen was nominated because of its prominent location next to the bike path near the entrance from Orient and E 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. The tree has a history of old flood damage at its base, where an old injury can be seen. Floods deposit soil over the original grade of the root collar, and sometimes, this soil can create a crown rot injury. The tree's root collar has been exposed, however, and the tree pruned to improve its safety and longevity.



This **53" diameter Blue Oak (*Quercus douglasii*)** is clearly seen by looking east from Baroni Neighborhood Park, and is located in the open space preserve in the Hillview Terrace Subdivision.. Blue oaks are found in the more upland areas of Chico, where the water table drops below 30' in depth. They therefore rely on an extensive root system to gather water for the long summer months, rather than the deep sinker roots of the valley oak. This makes them slower growing and more sensitive to construction that encroaches upon their canopy and root zone.

A mid-west species that was likely planted by the Bidwell's in Children's Playground, this **52" Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*)** is one of the largest in California – rivaling one in Sacramento that is considered the largest at 54". Our tree is an excellent specimen, with little to no limb breakage and is found at the north end of the Park. It is usually in full fall color for most of November and December.





The city's largest Heritage Tree is a 78" Valley oak located near the corner of Eaton and Cohasset and a 66" oak on Heritage Oak Drive. This tree grows on the bank of Sycamore Creek. At some point in time in the distant past, the soil was raised over the root collar of the tree, probably in the building of the levy and Eaton Road, to the south of the tree. Volunteers have cared for the tree over the years by installing large logs around the outside of the drip line to keep vehicles out from under the canopy, pruning and cabling the tree, and removing the excess soil over the root collar. Called the Eaton Oak, it is an incredible specimen that is a joy to stand under. One limb has grown to the ground and is helping to support the massive structure.

A tree that the City can be proud of preserving is found on Heritage Oak Drive. This 67" valley oak was recognized by the developer and care was taken to keep house foundations at the outer edge of the canopy. The street was carefully constructed around the tree as well. Not long after the tree was preserved, it broke a large limb growing to the north, so now the tree's canopy is pruned on a regular basis to reduce the weight on the long horizontal limbs so they don't break. An area at the base of the tree is mulched on a regular basis, and was made part of the street's right of way for the tree.



A 70" Bastogne or Paradox walnut (*Juglans hindsii x regia*) located at the new Park Forest Subdivision is a seedling hybrid between the English and the native black walnut. Fairly common in the Chico area, this tree was planted in 1900 as a pollinator for a small family owned walnut orchard. Property developers of Park Forest LLC set aside the area around the tree to protect it and feature the tree as a center piece of their Park Forest project on East 8<sup>th</sup> Street across from the Nature Center. They built a large ring around the dripline to protect it during construction. To date no significant damage has occurred from construction.



Two additional trees – located in the CARD Community Park off 20<sup>th</sup> Street were nominated for the program. On the south side of the park, at the end of Cleveland Street, a lovely 62" valley oak provides shade and beauty for a small picnic area. The tree existed long before the park was built, and has been pruned and cabled over the years.



A California black walnut (*Juglans hindsii*), of the type that John Bidwell planted around Chico, covers another picnic area north of the oak. It sits near the children's playground in the 20<sup>th</sup> Street Community Park. These trees are known for their exceedingly beautiful wood that is also quite valuable. The nuts are excellent eating, although cracking the nut is so difficult that they are no longer produced in California. They remain an agricultural necessity, though, and are used for root stock on most walnuts because they are resistant to the oak root fungus disease common to California soils.



A privately owned valley oak located at 2135 East 8<sup>th</sup> Street was nominated by the property owners in February of 2012. The tree is in excellent condition and provides both shade to the home. It also is a main focal point of the yard, and can easily be seen from East 8<sup>th</sup> Street.



Blue atlas cedars are planted throughout California, but rarely does one attain the size and grace of the tree located on the side of 1641 Mulberry. This tree has grown to over 50" in diameter, despite having been struck by lightning at some point in the past. The injury can still be seen on the central trunk, which is one reason why the two side branches have become dominant. This cedar is a City street tree.

## HELP US FIND MORE HERITAGE TREES!

Citizens owning significant trees who are interested in having them considered for Heritage Tree Status are encouraged to contact the City's Tree Division at (530) 896-7800, or email [parkinfo@Chicoca.gov](mailto:parkinfo@Chicoca.gov)