



Friends of Griffith Park

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July 10, 2019

RE: 13-1339, Mexican Elderberry / Toyon / Adding to Protected Tree List
Support for the Protected Tree Ordinance Amendment

To: Planning and Land Use Management Committee, Public Works and Gang Reduction Committee,
and City Council

Friends of Griffith Park, a non-profit, safeguards Griffith Park for future generations through advocacy, support, education, and service. Griffith Park abounds with toyon and elderberry, but on its soft edges and within many other urban residential areas we are losing both of these native species at an alarming rate because most people don't realize their habitat and wildlife value. We fully support adding these two species to the current protected tree species list.

When we hear spotted towhees or wrentits singing, both known as "indicator species" of healthy local Mediterranean habitat, most often we find ourselves surrounded by habitat that includes both toyon and elderberry. Native birds evolved with these two native species, with their prolific blooms and fruits. Elderberry can grow to 30 feet at ages of 60+ years. They are an important species to cavity-nesting birds (Nuttall's woodpecker, Oak titmouse, Western bluebirds and more) since major branches and the trunk become hollow with age.

With insect infestations devastating oaks and sycamores, toyon and elderberry become even more valuable ecologically, with our new era of drought conditions. Both are also good mitigation options for other protected tree species removed by choice when permits are granted, especially when large trees are not a good option.

We are all too aware that elderberry and toyon are often hacked down during brush modification procedures occurring within 200 feet of structures. These are the first two "shrub" species added to the protected species list. For this reason we hope that the City is able to do outreach to the various agencies (eg, LAFD, RAP) responsible for brush clearance when this important Ordinance amendment is implemented.

Sincerely,

Gerry Hans
VP, Science & Conservation

Marian Dodge
President