



North East Trees

Bringing Nature Back

September 17, 2019

City of Los Angeles
Planning and Land Use Management Committee
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Council file 13-1339, Support adding Toyon and Elderberry to the Protected Tree and Shrub Ordinance

Dear Honorable Council Members:

I am writing to support the addition of the Mexican Elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*) and the Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*) species to the Protected Tree and Shrub Ordinance.

I also urge you to support the Community Forest Advisory Committee's (CFAC) compromise for measuring the two new species. Their recommendation is that at least one trunk must measure 2 inches at 2.5 feet above the ground for an individual to merit protection. These species, like many of our native trees, often present with multiple trunks, and as a result many significant and mature specimens may not meet the standard supported by the Urban Forestry Division and Planning.

Protecting our Toyon and Elderberry trees and shrubs is a critical first step in helping the City become more sustainable and resilient in the face of climate change. As you know, the recent *First Steps for an Urban Forest Management Plan Report* prepared for the City concluded that we are at a tipping point for a potential catastrophic collapse of our urban forest. That report noted that 90% of our forest is on private property. Unless we act to protect both our public and private trees and significant shrubs we risk losing the many benefits these plants provide all of us. These trees and shrubs capture and infiltrate billions of gallons of stormwater annually. They capture and sequester tens on millions of pounds of carbon dioxide and other air pollutants annually. They provide shade that reduces the urban heat island effect and reduces energy consumption City wide. As the First Steps report notes, replacing these services these trees and would cost us tens of billions of dollars.

Finally, I would like to point out that there is an equity issue involved in protecting these species. Geographically these species tend to occur in our more affluent hillside communities but the services these trees and shrubs provide benefit all the residence of the City from Watts and South LA, to Boyle Height and El Sereno, to the many communities in the Valley. The cost to homeowners, developers, and the City itself to protect our urban canopy through this Ordinance is miniscule. It is a cost that our more affluent communities can easily bare, and the benefits thus derived for us all, but particularly for our most underserved and disadvantaged communities, are significant, something currently take for granted, and will sorely miss if we fail to act.

I urge you to recommend this Ordinance to the full Council and to adopt the CFAC compromise measurement methodology.

Sincerely,

Mark Kenyon
Executive Director

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North East Trees is a 501c-3 non-profit: "Bringing Nature Back to Resource Challenged Communities"