

26 October 2015

CF #15-0467

To: Los Angeles City Council members
RE: Urban Forest

Dear Council Members,

I am writing to express my concern about the condition of the urban forest in Los Angeles. It is my hope that, as you review the three motions put forward by Councilmember Koretz at today's meeting, the following ecosystem services that healthy trees provide will influence your decisions:

- Trees cast shade that counters the urban heat island effect
- Trees absorb and store carbon, which helps mitigate climate change
- They improve air quality
- Their leaves and branches channel rain water into the soil, thereby increasing ground water recharge and reducing runoff and flooding
- Their beauty enriches the urban landscape and increases property values
- They contribute to biodiversity by providing habitat for wildlife – food, nesting sites, and shelter

City policy acknowledges these benefits and has adopted national arboricultural standards, as stated on its website:

The benefits derived from Street Trees will be optimized by establishing urban forest programs that ensure that the collective population of Street Trees and their management:

- *Achieve an optimum degree of canopy cover in order to shade City streets and thereby help mitigate the urban heat island effect, and maximize the benefits from the urban forest ecosystem.*

The Street Trees of Los Angeles will be properly maintained and enhanced through policies and programs that:

- *Utilize consistent, approved state-of-the-art standards for planting, pruning, management and removal of trees along the public streets.*

Per the City of Los Angeles' Street Tree Policies, all street tree pruning is in compliance with International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Tree Pruning Guidelines and American National Standards Institute (ANSI) A300 standards. These guidelines prohibit "topping" or "heading."

Unfortunately, the City has done a poor job maintaining the urban forest, in part due to inadequate funding for the Bureau of Street Services but also due to a failure to enforce its own aforementioned policies. The City bears responsibility for excessive and substandard trimming by contracted tree companies, trimming that compromises the natural character and aesthetic value of trees and results in the following negative environmental consequences:

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- Undue exposure of live tissue to pests and diseases
- Excessive flushes of new growth that are typically weakly attached and subject to limb failure, thereby increasing hazardous conditions
- Increased urban heat island effect
- Increased air pollution due to the burning of fossil fuels used to operate power tools
- Excessive green waste production
- Reduced wildlife habitat from loss of cover, shelter, and food

In sum, these practices have harmed rather than helped the urban forest. They set a very bad example of pruning practices for private property owners, compromise overall quality of life for residents, and represent a misuse of funds. The City should limit trimming to the essentials during this extended drought – e.g. structural pruning, addressing hazards – and focus on measures that aid trees, such as irrigating drought-stressed specimens, removing tree stakes that are now wounding or impeding healthy growth, etc.

I respectfully urge the Council to take action that will lead to more sustainable management and stewardship of the City's urban forest. This will involve collaboration among all departments involved in caring for the urban forest. By working together, you can help make Los Angeles a healthier, more livable community for everyone.

Carol Bornstein
Horticulturist
1215 ½ S. Point View
Los Angeles, CA 90035

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October 25, 2015

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To Whom It May Concern:

While I am not able to attend the LA City Council meeting on Monday, I feel very strongly about issues related to proper maintenance and protection of our "urban forest" in Los Angeles. As Director of the Mildred E. Mathias Botanical Garden at UCLA, I am acutely aware of the need for proper irrigation and maintenance of trees, while keeping in mind the issues of our ongoing drought and sustainability in water use. The urban trees of Los Angeles that are so widely present in our parks and gardens and along our streets need informed management to protect this invaluable resource.

While Angelenos are making many excellent steps to reduce their water use in these drought times, I am greatly concerned that some of this effort related to removal of landscape plants is poorly conceived and will have strongly negative effects. With the concern to reduce water use in Los Angeles, and more broadly across California, there has been a rush to remove laws and other yard landscaping. Indeed, there have been subsidies paid to homeowners or private contractors to remove lawns and plant "drought-adapted" plants. However, many of these new plantings are poorly planned and badly implemented, and will likely fail. My great concern is that many of our yard and urban street trees depend on lawn or landscape irrigation for their source of water. If irrigation is sharply curtailed in yards, many street trees and landscape shrubs will suffer, decline, and possibly die.

Trees in our yards and along our streets play a highly significant role in many ways. They provide shade and through this energy saving in heating and cooling, wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, erosion control, recreation value, and psychological well being, and enhanced property values. Beyond all of these roles, trees and our urban forest have important historic and culture value.

If well established and maintained, which is too often not the case, street trees do not require large amounts of water. Recent studies by professional staff at University of California Cooperative Extension suggest that simply irrigating in a judicious manner can save significant amounts of water, and might be sufficient by itself to meet mandatory 25% to 35% water reductions without changing the landscape to so-called "low-water use" or "drought-tolerant" plants.

Mature trees in the urban area are one of our most valuable natural resources. Weighing the costs of properly irrigating and maintaining these trees against the benefits they provide clearly shows that urban trees are worth the investment in resources, especially water, even in this time of severe drought. With proper management and irrigation, we can enjoy the amenities and benefits that urban street trees provide, without contributing to our drought problems.

best wishes,

Philip Rundel

Philip W. Rundel
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It is time -- the City must hire contractual or full time Ecologists/Biologists and Botanists to aid in drought management at the tree street and habitat levels.

Homeowners must be reminded : many birds and animals rely on run off from sprinklers to remain alive during drought. If landowners do not separately provide water for our local, native birds and migrants, they will perish, if those owners stop watering and replace grass with artificial turf.

The City and owners of land should NOT use artificial turf - - they should replant with habitat -- drought resistant shrubs and trees in any form to maintain live soil -- which helps trap and hold water. Only living soil can do this.

I also wish to inform the Council that along the West Los Angeles parkways where the tallest trees have been maintained, new adult birds of prey, both Red Tailed Hawks and Cooper Hawks that were bred in these trees in the last years have returned. These animals are our natural control for mice, rats and feral pigeons along the streets and freeways. Maintaining tall, healthy mature forest along parkway and City streets lets them breed, and allows them to do their job.

With respect, and thanks to the office of Mr. Koretz, submitted,

Victoria J. Waks, M.A.
Raptor and Habitat Preservationist

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October 26, 2015 – Council file #15-0467

Thanks to the City and the Mayor for the opportunity to provide input to the increasingly important issue of tree preservation in the City of Los Angeles.

We have already experienced the worst drought year in the history of the City; more will come. It is imperative that the City enact and enforce strict legislation to preserve our mature, large trees and micro green belts as we expand to meet the needs of the people.

Landowners need to be reminded: water trees not grass. Trees can continue to pull carbon dioxide from our footprints and mature trees do this best. Discontinue all trimming and canopy maintenance; this does not help trees in a drought situation. No trimming should be done during a drought; canopy must be preserved to lower our street temperatures and clean the air, as well as help maintain habitat for bird and natural wildlife breeding.

Keep parkways and city streets well shaded; maintain mature, stable trees. The parkway designated for the Motor Avenue/Northvale Bike path contains mature, tall Eucalyptus, Silky Oak and Sycamore -- *without any watering from the City or homeowners, these trees have suffered minimal damage, despite countless days over 100 degrees this summer.*

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Oct. 26, 2015

Council File
15-0467

Dear City Council,

I am unable to attend the meeting today but would like to add the following comments to the public record:

It is important to try to preserve our existing street trees for the following reasons:

- 1) Microclimate - trees provide shade and can reduce the temperature of the surrounding area by several degrees. Street trees can reduce the temperature of the sidewalks and streets.
- 2) Habitat for birds and other wildlife - many birds have become dependent on trees for nesting, food and shelter. Many raptors use the taller trees for nesting sites.
- 3) Prevent evaporation and energy costs- shade from trees can reduce evaporation of surrounding landscapes. Also shade from trees can reduce energy costs from air-conditioning.
- 4) Carbon sinks - trees are effective carbon sinks. The process of photosynthesis takes carbon out of our atmosphere.
- 5) Aesthetics - trees increase property value and add aesthetics to a neighborhood.
- 6) Is consistent with the DWPs free tree program ([Welcome to City Plants](#)) and the City's million tree initiative. ([Million Trees LA](#))

Thank you

Dorna Sakurai
Adjunct Professor, Life Sciences Department
Santa Monica College

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For
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From: **Dog Park** <sepulvedadogpark@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Oct 26, 2015 at 1:17 AM
Subject: Public Works Committee Tree Motion Support
To: "Gurmet K. Khara" <gurmet.khara@lacity.org>
Cc: Terr Lieberstein <ter@lovingstone.com>, Tony Callas <tonycal818@yahoo.com>, Kelly Caldwell <Kelly@barkatthepark.net>, Steve Berman <bucknutso@aol.com>

Gurmet,

I just realized that this coming Monday was the day that the motion on healthy trees would be introduced.

If this helps I'd like to write an endorsement.

To Whom This May Concern,

Along with the board of the Friends Sepulveda Basin Off-Leash Dog Park, we have seen the loss of many trees in the last 4 years at our park, due in part to the drought. We know the importance of trees to our healthy existence and have done everything in our power to help the struggling trees this past summer survive.

At times we have felt alone in our concern and as we see our city become more concrete and gravel and worry about how little thought is being given to not only the non-native trees, but all trees of every age that are struggling.

This is important to our city, and overall global environment, both of which will be here so much longer than we will. To ignore the plight of our diminishing landscape would be a sad detriment to our present and future.

We applaud Councilmember Koretz's motion and support it 100%.

Sincerely,

Miriam Preissel
President
Friends of the Sepulveda Basin Off-Leash Dog Park

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