

TREES IN OAKLAND

A Publication of the Sierra Club Tree Team

Volume I, Issue 1 - Spring 2015



FIRST EDITION OF OUR NEWSLETTER

Welcome!

This is the first edition of our “Trees in Oakland” newsletter, brought to you by the all-volunteer Sierra Club Tree Team, affiliated with the San Francisco Bay Chapter of the Sierra Club.

Over the last five years, we have been diligently collecting e-mail addresses and phone numbers from the caretakers of the 1,200 trees we have planted here in Oakland. We have now digitized our list and can distribute this little newsletter by post or e-mail.



The Sierra Club Tree Team at work

Contact information:

Sierra Club, San Francisco Bay Chapter Office:
2530 San Pablo Avenue Suite 1, Berkeley, CA 94702
Phone: (510)910-6451 Email: sctreeplanting@gmail.com

WHAT WE CAN DO FOR YOU

1. Get A Street-Tree for You: The Sierra Club Tree Team is a fully approved volunteer tree-planting group in the City of Oakland. We have licensed landscape architects on our team, along with seasoned tree-planters and -pruners, and we know the nurseries, so we can put a fine new fifteen-gallon tree in the planting strip in front of your home.

2. Prune Your Tree: Most folks want a street-tree to be tall and clear of limbs below seven feet. Our skilled volunteer staff has been trained to remove branches that impede a tree’s proper growth pattern and can help you learn these principles too.

3. Remove Pavement: Over 40% of the sites in Oakland that could receive a street-tree are covered with concrete or asphalt. This pavement increases urban run-off during storms and makes it harder for tree roots to interchange air in the vadose zone. Our contractor can remove as much pavement as you need, whether you want to plant one street-tree or a whole new garden strip. This is not free, but we charge a competitive price.

4. Replace Soil: Occasionally, a tree does poorly because its immediate surroundings are nothing but rock or gravel. We can remove that gravel and bring in top-quality soil for your tree to flourish.

5. Install a Dripping Water Bag System: In the last two years, a new system to deliver water to tree roots has been developed: the so-called dripping water bag. Made of a heavy plastic film, these bags get filled with five gallons of water and slowly drip the water onto the roots; they also cover the soil immediately next to a young tree and prevent the soil from drying out. We are installing drip bags at some new planting sites and they are also available as a retrofit for trees planted in the last three years. Feel free to ask for one.

WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR (OR WITH) US

1. Report Neglected Trees: Oakland City employees still deal with all fallen or heavily damaged trees, but you can call us when a young tree looks bad due to lack of water, gets hit by a car or truck, or gets damaged by a weedwhacker. Think of us; we can help. Email or call the number on the first page of this newsletter.

2. Get Your Neighbors to Request Trees: The most successful planting programs we have done are where a volunteer from the neighborhood takes the initiative and gets others in her/his area to ask for trees of their own. It's easy work, but it builds up the neighborhood and housing values, and helps create community. Our staff can help you get started.

3. Report Unneeded Stakes: One of the ways we stay inexpensive is that we recover and refurbish the metal or wooden stakes from street trees that have outgrown them. From 1999 to 2008, the City of Oakland installed a green steel stakes at each new tree planted; the Sierra Club Tree Team started in 2010 with 175 new stakes from the City, but we have recovered over 800 more steel stakes from older trees. We also use wooden stakes to support a cage around a young tree if it needs more protection than the metal stake alone will give. If a tree has a trunk at least three inches thick at your chest height, it is big enough not to need a stake. Please tell us where these stakes are.

4. Donate to Our Program: Because of our base of volunteer labor, we can plant more trees for every \$1,000 spent than any other Northern California operation. We have applications for 300 trees, ready-to-plant, that need your financial support to get in the ground. The world is willing but the money isn't there yet. Page 4 of this newsletter includes information about making donations.

5. Plant or Prune with Us: We plant and prune on most Saturday mornings between November and June, from 9am to 1pm, and you are welcome to join us. Digging and planting can be a bit of a workout, but you see the results immediately while you help build our community. You can help; please do.

TREES AND OUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The urban forest we all enjoy in Oakland is mostly not native growth. While the Oakland hills were heavily forested for centuries, the flatlands were primarily prairie-type lands with trees only in the creekbeds. Developers planted trees in Oakland early in the 20th century to appeal to new residents from the East who loved and expected trees; many of those trees are now dying or have already died and been removed.

Trees have not been a local priority. Despite Oakland being voted a very green city in national polls, the tree cover here is poor and getting worse. Inadequate public funds have not allowed the replacement of the 1,200 trees a year being lost to death through disease, old age, and accident. We at the Sierra Club Tree Team believe this should change. We hope to turn your interest in more trees in Oakland into a groundswell of public interest that would restore tree planting in Oakland as a municipal function: a cost of \$350,000 a year in an overall City budget of 600 million dollars.

Another area of our interest is removing concrete from the planting strips. This excess "hardscape" is a major cause of pollution and sewer overflows. Our team pays more to remove concrete from a planting site than we pay for the tree itself or the steel stake. Various clean-water interests are starting to push the City of Oakland to reduce its hardscape. We are pleased that City staff has decreed that all replacement sidewalk work will not include the planting strip areas; this is the first step in getting more softscape next to our roads. Less paving also means less cost to the City!

OUR PLANS FOR 2015

The SF Bay Chapter Executive Committee gave us \$10,000 in early February to plant more than a hundred new trees in East Oakland, which has far fewer trees than other parts of the city have. Since our team began in 2010, we have planted around 270 trees per year, limited by the small number of volunteers. We will need more volunteers to get these trees planted in East Oakland.

We are also expecting a nice portion of the \$45,000 that American Forests has awarded to planting groups in Oakland (coming mostly from the Bank of America Charitable Foundation). The exact amounts will be determined late in the spring.

JANE BRUNNER: THANK YOU AGAIN

From 2000 to 2012, Jane Brunner served as councilmember from Oakland City Council District One, the district closest to Berkeley. Since she ran unopposed for her second and third terms on the council, the contributions to her campaign exceeded her need. She set those extra funds aside and used them to pay Oakland's tree-department costs to plant trees until the city stopped planting trees in 2008. When she learned of our small program in late 2010, she covered all of our costs, some \$22,000, during 2011 and 2012. We remember her fondly and will always be grateful for her generosity toward our work.



Jane Brunner, then-Oakland City Councilmember, planting a tree with some young Oakland residents

L'ENVOI

("The Dispatch")

from Arthur Boone

When I stopped working forty hours a week ("retiring," they called it) in 2004, it never occurred to me that ten years later I would be alive with no apparent and imminent causes for my demise. So, when in the fall of 2009, John Alderson suggested we start a volunteer tree-planting project to replace the effort lost when the City of Oakland responded to a budget crunch in summer 2008 by voting to lay off a lot of the tree department and suspend planting trees, I said, after consulting with various persons, "Yes." Now, nearly 1,270 trees planted since we started work in early 2010, my body is wearing down and my interests are moving elsewhere.

A talented group of people are plotting the next steps for our work, with representation from the local Sierra Club group and staff from Northgate Environmental Management (a small, Oakland-based consulting firm). I expect to be involved in the overall program as a Senior Advisor but will be removed from the lifting and digging that has been the major part of our effort for the last four and a half years. I turned 77 in March and it's time for less strenuous activities. The planting team has been a great blessing to me; the nicest people I have ever worked with.

Best to all. ARB



Arthur Boone, founder and leader of the Sierra Club Tree Team

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

HELP GET MORE TREES PLANTED IN OAKLAND! DONATE TO THE SIERRA CLUB TREE TEAM

When you donate to the Sierra Club Tree Team, you will help get more trees planted in Oakland, as well as getting a charitable deduction on your 2015 tax return.

Please make out your check to "The Sierra Club Foundation", with a memo of "NACG Tree Team Account" [NACG = Northern Alameda County Group]. Gifts to The Sierra Club Foundation are tax-deductible.

Mail your check and this form to the following address:

Sierra Club Tree Team
c/o Anna Robinson, Treasurer, Sierra Club NACG
1865 San Pedro Ave
Berkeley, CA 94707

Please indicate the amount of your donation:

- \$25: Pays for a refurbished steel stake to be placed at a newly planted tree, plus compost and mulch over the soil.
- \$50: Pays for a new tree from the nursery.
- \$75: Pays for a new tree plus the stake, compost, and mulch.
- \$200: Pays for removal of a rectangle of concrete, as well as a new tree, stake, compost, and mulch.
- _____ (other amount of your choosing)

Your name: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Email: _____

We will let you know about future Tree Team plantings and other events.

For more information about the Sierra Club Tree Team, visit <http://sierraclub.org/san-francisco-bay/tree-planting>.