

MOTION

PUBLIC WORKS

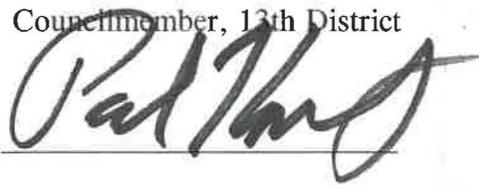
The Coast Live Oak Tree (*Quercus agrifolia*) has long been the unsung hero of Los Angeles' expansive urban forest. It is the City's most common native tree, and historically was an integral part of many communities' material cultures. It sustained indigenous inhabitants with edible acorns - Southern California's native Gabrielino (Tongva) people ate acorns by pounding them in stone mortars, leaching the powder of its tannins, and then eating the wet acorn meal as a cold mush or baking them in ashes to make bread. Oaks and the acorns they provided were so essential to life that several many indigenous communities placed them at the center of their creation myths. In the 18th century, settlers used its wood to fuel the region's development, using the wood for charcoal to fire kilns in making adobe.

Even today, the tree is befitting of LA's increasingly harsh climate, evolving ecosystem, the City's efforts to curb the urban heat-island effect, and Angelenos' needs for cool refuge. The evergreen oak grows predominantly west of the central valleys, as far north as Mendocino County, and as far south as northern Baja California in Mexico. Its leaves are small and cupped to reduce exposure to the sun, and the hairs on their undersides help preserve precious moisture. These water-saving techniques allow the tree to go without rainfall for up to nine months a year. The bark grows, on average, one inch thick allowing the oak to withstand most low- to medium-intensity fires with its inner tissue intact and enabling new branches to sprout later. Even in high-intensity fires, like the 2003 Cedar Fire, which can be catastrophic for many species, mid-sized and large oaks experience relatively high survival rates. The ability for oaks to resprout rapidly post-fire also provides valuable habitat that accelerates post-fire recovery. And when the fallen leaves and twigs decay, they create a rich, porous soil that soaks up water, helping to reduce flooding and recharging the city's groundwater. The crown can reach 70 feet in diameter, making it good at providing shade, offering a cool refuge from the sun.

The Coast Live Oak Tree flourished in Los Angeles long before the establishment of the City and it should be recognized for its historic, cultural, economic and symbolic value to the region.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Bureau of Street Services with the assistance of the Cultural Heritage Commission, be instructed to report on the feasibility of and recommendations for also designating the California native Coastal Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) as an official tree of the City of Los Angeles.

PRESENTED BY: 
 MITCH O'FARRELL
 Councilmember, 13th District

SECONDED BY: 

ORIGINAL

PK