



Oaks and Woodland Habitat.

Ten things to know about Oaks.

1. Oaks are special. Oaks are characteristic of the California landscape. We see them all over the rolling hills in our county, and occasionally in groves on the valley floor.
(view pictures of rolling oak woodlands, and also of valley oaks online)
2. Five species dominate Napa County oak woodlands, and one specie is found only in California, the valley oak, quercus lobata.
(See picture/s of Valley oak/s, Blue oak, Black oak, Coast and Interior live oak)
3. Live oaks are evergreen. The others are deciduous. The leaves are different. (Refer to oak ID handout)
4. The role oaks play in the woodland habitat is rich and diverse:
 - Shade and Shelter
 - Wildlife and Fisheries habitat
 - Home for Birds, and Butterfly larvae
 - Erosion control and Soil protection
 - Increased property value, Beautiful landscapes, Size, Foliage
 - Food and Fuel
 - Food for birds and mammals, fuel for humans from naturally downed trees—Fuel for wildfires, too
 - A total of 313 species of living organisms can be found in the naturally occurring oak woodland habitat!
5. Oak trees require thoughtful management, especially in the urban setting. The usual garden practices such as amending the soil, planting lawns or irrigating under established oaks can damage them.
 - Protect the root zone—do not disturb the area between the trunk and dripline. No grading, digging, trenching, landscaping, walking, or driving.
 - DO retain natural litter, or add mulch. Keep as natural and undisturbed as possible.
 - (View pictures of landscape oaks in natural setting on W. Oak Knoll)
6. Oaks in natural settings are relatively resistant to severe damage from pests. But when compromised by compaction, moisture, other disturbances, organisms that cause injury can take advantage.
 - Symptoms of problems—loss of vigor, twig dieback, yellow leaves
 - Wounds

Fluid oozing from bark
Emergence of mushrooms (not chanterelles) near the base
(View pictures of SOD online)

7. Sudden Oak Death
Phytophthora ramorum

A funguslike water mold that causes bark cankers (know what a canker is) that can girdle and kill mature trees.

Four of California's 21 species of native oak are susceptible:

Coast live oak, Black oak, Canyon live oak, Shreve's oak

Confirmed in 14 coastal counties, Monterey to Humboldt

Inland conditions appear to be too hot and dry to permit SOD spread to Central Valley or Sierra foothills.

(In Napa County, in the eastern foothills—Mayacamas, and in Carneros)

8. You may see these in oak trees, but they rarely kill the tree
Mistletoe, a parasite
Spanish moss, which is really a lichen
Oak galls, harmless swellings in response to enzymes released when a gall wasp lays an egg and the larvae begin to eat
(View pictures online—fascinating!)
9. Oaks are special. What can you do to help? You, personally, can help preserve and take care of them whether or not you have one. Support local groups that ask city councils and planning departments and land developers to preserve the oak habitats in their jurisdictions.

It's our job as stewards of our county in the 21st century to take care of existing oaks, and encourage natural oak regeneration.

That's only 9, but that's enough to think about and try to remember about oaks.

Well, here is 10. Optimists plant oak trees! Plant with the future in mind. They should be planted where they can get plenty of space, undisturbed space to grow and thrive. Seedlings have to be cared for to ensure their growth and protect them from damage by animals or humans.

We hope you will find a way to support and care for oak trees in our county, whether it's one in your backyard, the ones on the hills all around us, or those rare specimens on the valley floor.