

City of Richmond Native Tree Survey

The City of Richmond wants your input to decide Richmond's official native tree.

On June 24, 2025, the Richmond City Council approved the creation and publication of an online survey. The official tree will be a native tree that will thrive in the City. Upon the selection of the tree, a space at Civic Center Plaza will be made to celebrate the newly selected official Richmond native tree.

How this list was created by the Urban Forest Advisory Committee (UFAC):

The UFAC is made up of Richmond residents who are passionate about the city's urban forest. Its mission is to support the Urban Greening Master Plan by protecting trees in our communities. A subcommittee was tasked with recommending California native trees that would be appropriate for selection of the official native tree for the City of Richmond. The subcommittee decided on the following criteria: the tree should be drought tolerant, versatile in terms of microclimates it can grow in, somewhat versatile in terms of landscape use, be trained to a single trunk, and be relatively disease resistant. The subcommittee also considered interesting and attractive features, such as flowering and value to pollinators and wildlife. Finally, the subcommittee wanted to nominate trees that were distinctive enough from each other, to provide the public with various options to select from. Several features are included that show why native trees are important to the wildlife food web especially their ability to provide food for native caterpillars which are in turn essential food for birds raising their babies. Historic uses by native people show how trees have contributed to our quality of life here for thousands of years (Please note that use information is from Native American Ethnobotany Database and has not been confirmed by living members of these nations. Also, please consult with an expert before exploring any food uses on your own).

Below please choose one tree. Pictures and descriptions of the trees are listed to inform your decision. Background information provided by [Urban Forest Advisory Committee \(UFAC\)](#) and [Calscape - California Native Plant Society](#).

Final Submissions for Survey: Monday, September 22nd, 2025 at 4:00 PM PST

* Indicates required question



1. Vote on the City of Richmond's Official Tree *
(background information is described below)

Mark only one oval.

- California Buckeye (*Aesculus californica*)
- Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*)
- Ray Hartman Ceanothus (*Ceanothus* 'Ray Hartman')
- Hollyleaf Cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia* ssp. *ilicifolia*)

California Buckeye (*Aesculus californica*)

California Buckeye (*Aesculus californica*) - A lovely spreading tree with spikes of fragrant (some would say grape scented) creamy white to pale pink flowers in the spring/summer. Butterflies love them. It has beautiful fan shaped leaves that drop in the fall, revealing the silvery white trunk of the tree, which over time becomes dappled with orange lichens - so colorful! In the fall and winter the round buckeye nuts hang from the tree like ornaments. Squirrels and other creatures benefit from this food source.

- Size: Can grow to 39 ft high x 40 ft wide, depending on conditions.
- Best time to prune: Late winter or early spring before new growth begins.
- Water: Low to very low water needs. Drought tolerant and summer-dry. Leaves last longer with more water.
- Native range: All of California, especially northern California, Coast ranges and Sierras.
- Leaves are food for caterpillars: 13 species of moths and butterflies according to Calscape.org.
- Pollinator importance: Blooms can extend from April into July. Abundant flowers are an important resource for native bees.
- Historic significance and use by Native American people: Nuts were used for food after extensive process of boiling and leaching to make them edible as a flour. Used for fire drills, tinder and fuel. According to the Native American Ethnobotany Database, California Buckeye had and has several uses including bark for toothaches, seeds for poison for fishing, processed seeds as a food source (especially when other food is scarce), and wood for making friction fire sticks.

California Buckeye (*Aesculus californica*)



Coast Live Oak (Quercus agrifolia)

Coast Live Oak (Quercus agrifolia) - Beautiful and majestic, this evergreen tree has leaves year-round and is home and host to a vast number of birds and other animals, including up to 143 moth/butterfly species (according to Calscape.org). It provides copious shade for people, reduces the reflective heat of paved surfaces, and improves the air quality of our environment through carbon capture and filtering other toxic particulate matter.

- Size: Grows up to 82 ft tall x 35 ft wide depending on conditions.
- Water: Very low, low, moderate, prefers summer dry after establishment. Best not to plant this tree near summer irrigation.
- Native range: Coastal California and Coast Ranges from the Bay Area to San Diego.
- Leaves are food for caterpillars: Hosts up to 162 species of moths and butterflies according to Calscape.org.
- Pollinator importance: An early bloomer from February to April.
- Historic significance and use by Native American people: Oak acorns were the primary protein source for most California native people. Soaked to leach out tannins, then ground into a flour that was often mixed with flour from many other types of seeds. Bark and leaves were used medicinally. Wood used for tools, containers and fuel, and galls were used for dye. According to the Native American Ethnobotany Database, in addition to using processed acorns for food, some Native American Nations have used/use the wood for firewood, acorns for necklaces or children's games, and a decoction of bark for sores.

Coast Live Oak (Quercus agrifolia)



Ray Hartman Ceanothus (Ceanothus 'Ray Hartman')

Ray Hartman ceanothus (Ceanothus 'Ray Hartman') - A small tree that bursts with fragrant blue flowers in the late winter to early spring, hosting a large number of pollinators. It is a handsome evergreen with small, glossy, dark green leaves year round. To keep it more tree than shrub, early pruning and shaping are helpful. It is a hybrid of Ceanothus arboreus and Ceanothus thyrsiflorus var. Griseus and therefore is likely to support approximately 20-80 moth/butterfly species. Ray Hartman Ceanothus is versatile due to its compact size, getting up to 20 feet tall and 15 feet wide, and requiring little to no water. Ceanothus can be short lived trees (approx. 30 years).

- Size: Can grow to 30 ft tall x 10 ft wide, depending on conditions
- Best time to prune: prune spring-flowering varieties immediately after they finish blooming.
- Water: Low water use, prefers summer-dry.
- Native range: This garden hybrid of island ceanothus (Ceanothus arboreus) and Carmel ceanothus (Ceanothus griseus) is available in nurseries statewide.
- Leaves are food for caterpillars: A close relative, blueblossom ceanothus, hosts 93 species of moths and butterflies according to Calscape.org.
- Pollinator importance: Abundant blossoms in March and April.
- Historic significance and use by Native American people: Flower seeds were used as food, leaves used medicinally, roots used as dye and flowers used as soap due to their saponin content. According to the Native American Ethnobotany Database, some Native American Nations use/have used flowers for soap and wood for firewood.

Ray Hartman Ceanothus (Ceanothus 'Ray Hartman')



Hollyleaf Cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia* ssp. *ilicifolia*)

Hollyleaf Cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia* ssp. *ilicifolia*) - A petite, rounded evergreen tree or shrub with small white flower spikelets in spring. The shiny leaves are an attractive deep green and are reminiscent of holly leaves - that's where it gets its name! To keep it more tree than shrub, early pruning and shaping are helpful. The tree produces small cherry-like fruit that provide a food source for wildlife. Humans can eat the fruit, too, if they are motivated enough to teeth-scrape the thin amount of flesh from the large seed.

- Size: Grows to 49 ft high x 20 wide depending on conditions.
- Best time to prune: mid to late summer (June or July) to reduce the risk of silver leaf fungal disease. Pruning in the summer allows cuts to heal quickly, before the fungal spores become a problem. You can remove dead or diseased branches at any time they are noticed, but major pruning for shaping or maintenance should occur in midsummer.
- Water: Very low, low or moderate. Tolerates irrigation or summer dry conditions.
- Native range: Coastal California from the Bay Area south to San Diego.
- Leaves are food for caterpillars: 144 species of moths and butterflies according to Calscape.org.
- Pollinator importance: Blooms from March to June or longer depending on conditions.
- Historic significance and use by Native American people: Fruit is prized by birds, and by people, ground into a meal for porridge and cakes or fermented into a beverage. Bark and roots were infused for medicinal uses. Pruned by native people to produce more abundant fruit. According to the Native American Ethnobotany Database, in addition to food, some Native American Nations have used/use the wood for bows and an infusion of leaves to ease coughs.

Hollyleaf Cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia* ssp. *ilicifolia*)



Section 2 - Additional Questions

* Required

2. Please choose the best option that describes you. *

Mark only one oval.

- I currently reside in the City of Richmond, CA
- I do not currently reside in City of Richmond, CA

3. First Name *

4. Last Name *

5. Please provide your email (Optional).

6. Which Richmond, CA zip code do you live in? *

Mark only one oval.

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I do not know

None of the above / Not applicable

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