CONTRA COSTA MASTER GARDENERS

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Growing Coast Redwoods

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Majestic Coast Redwoods can thrive in gardens. Make sure you have the room.

SUMMARY

Commonly planted in Bay Area landscapes, redwoods need careful siting with plenty of room. Minimal, simple care will allow them to thrive for many years.

Coast redwood, *Sequoia sempervirens*, is surely one of the most commonly planted trees in our landscapes. Native to the Coast Ranges from southern Oregon to central coastal California, they grown naturally where there is both precipitation and coastal moisture. Where it is best adapted, an established tree gets all the moisture it needs from fog drip. In its native range, a redwood tree grows rapidly in its early years and can be 70-90 feet tall and 15-30 feet wide in 25 years. Some of the oldest specimens in the wild are over 350 feet tall and are the tallest trees in the world. In less favorable conditions it grows more slowly and will only reach 50 feet over 25 years but ultimately can reach 200 feet or more.

Coast redwood is a beautiful tree - evergreen, upright and pyramidal with a red-brown fibrous barked trunk that is well adapted to most locations in the greater Bay Area. Like all native plants that you plant in your landscape, you get best results when you replicate what you can of its natural habitat.

Location in the Landscape:

Give careful consideration to its potential mature height and spread prior to planting in the landscape. Most redwoods removed from landscapes were not correctly sited.

Soil:

Redwoods prefer a well drained and acidic soil like that found in native stands, but can tolerate other conditions.

Light:

Provide full sun to light shade. Too much shade and trees will grow thin and lanky.

Water:

Redwoods have a shallow and fibrous root system and so do best with regular irrigation, in particular for the first 5 years. Don't water near the trunk, instead water around the drip line and beyond where most water uptake oc-

curs. Help conserve soil moisture by applying plenty of organic mulch, but make sure mulch is not piled against the trunk & root crown. Even better, allow the natural duff to collect under the tree. This duff is comprised of the oldest leaves and twigs which turn brown and drop in late summer or early fall. Good irrigation is particularly important during the summer and an unexpected heat wave can cause leaf burn, particularly on the south and west sides of the tree.

Nutrients:
Regular fertilization is typically not necessary. Nutrient deficiencies rarely occur in most woody landscape plants. When they do occur, nitrogen and iron deficiencies are the most commonly seen. Leaves in summer can turn yellow (chlorotic) due to a need for iron. Redwoods naturally prefer an acidic soil where iron is very available but our soils are often neutral to alkaline resulting in iron shortages. If you notice chlorosis, apply iron sulfate or chelates.

Pruning:
Trees need little to no pruning. You can remove any broken branches or the lower branches if you wish to expose the trunk.

Summary:
Redwoods are remarkably pest free and fire-resistant, and they provide habitat for many animal and plant species. While they are still young, their foliage makes excellent wind barriers, privacy screens and backdrop for shrubs that require similar growing conditions. Thoughtful placement and good care will enhance their long-lasting ornamental value in a group or as a specimen tree.

"Thoughtful placement and good care will enhance the Coast redwood's long-lasting ornamental value..."

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