

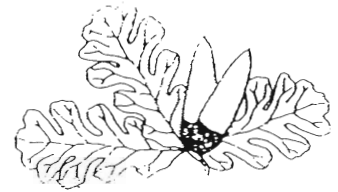
NATIVE TREES OF MALIBU CREEK STATE PARK

Trees are scarce in Southern California but Malibu Creek State Park, with an average of 22" of rainfall annually, has some good stands of native trees with over a dozen species forming savannas (tree-dotted grasslands), woodlands, and occasionally dense forests throughout the park. Two of our native trees are evergreens, the other ten drop their leaves in the fall. Because of usually low temperatures in the park several of our trees give good fall color, especially the Sycamores, Ashes, Walnuts and Cottonwoods.

Our native trees have adapted to our dry climate either by growing in places where ground water is abundant, such as canyon bottoms or north facing slopes, or by developing large root systems to obtain food and water from a large area.

Most of our trees are also adapted to fire. Live Oaks have thick, moist bark that insulates the living layer underneath from the heat of a fire. Other trees are killed back by fire but can regrow from an underground root system, usually with several trunks. A few trees, like Valley Oak, are not able to withstand brush fires so are able to survive only in open grasslands.

VALLEY OAK OR WHITE OAK – This is the great oak of the central valley reaching its southern limit in the Malibu Canyon area. The bark is gray and deeply ridged. The leaves are lobed and drop off in the fall leaving the rugged limbs bare throughout the winter. Valley Oak is the largest American oak. Record trunk size is nine feet in diameter. Trees four to six feet in diameter are common in the park. Valley Oaks live on valley bottoms and low foothills only - the best areas for farms and houses. For this reason and because cattle eat the seedlings, this tree is declining throughout its range. Malibu Creek State Park contains the only protected stand in Southern California. Valley Oaks are found only in the grasslands in the eastern part of the park, dotting the hills around the parking lot and the open area east of the Visitor Center.



COAST LIVE OAK – This is the common oak of Southern California. The leaves are holly-shaped and cupped with pointed bristles and the acorns are long and pointed. Live Oaks are found throughout the park, especially on north-facing slopes. Most Live Oaks are medium-sized trees, but a few are fifteen to twenty feet in circumference and several hundred years old. Live Oak acorns (along with the acorns from the Valley Oak) were an important food for the Chumash Indians who once lived in the area. There is a dense forest of Live Oaks just south of Century Lake and they line the High Road on the north side of the creek.



CALIFORNIA SYCAMORE – A Large tree with white and brown mottled bark found along Malibu Creek and in rocky side canyons. Sycamore is the most common canyon tree in Southern California. The leaves turn orange in the fall. Sycamores have strong well-rooted trunks so that they can resist winter floods. There is a large multi-trunked sycamore in front of the Visitor Center.



BAY – Also known as Oregon Myrtle and California Laurel, Bay is a valuable timber tree. The leaves are sold commercially as a seasoning. Bay is common in cool, shady canyons, such as around the mouth of the gorge, along Mott Road, or in the oak forest south of the lake.

LEATHERLEAF ASH – Found along Malibu Creek, this is a variety of Arizona Ash with soft, velvety leaves, giving it another name of Velvet Ash. Ashes are good timber trees in the east. The strong, flexible wood is used for tool handles, baseball bats, etc. Away from the creek you may find FLOWERING ASH, which has smaller leaves and white flowers in the spring.



Other trees found in the park are: COTTONWOOD (FREMONT AND BLACK), SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BLACK WALNUT, WILLOW, RED WILLOW, ARROYO WILLOW, AND BIG LEAF MAPLE.

There are also trees in the park that are not native to the area. Two of these are the Eucalyptus, from Australia, on Mott Road across from the creek crossing, and the Redwoods that are growing along the south shore of Century Lake.