

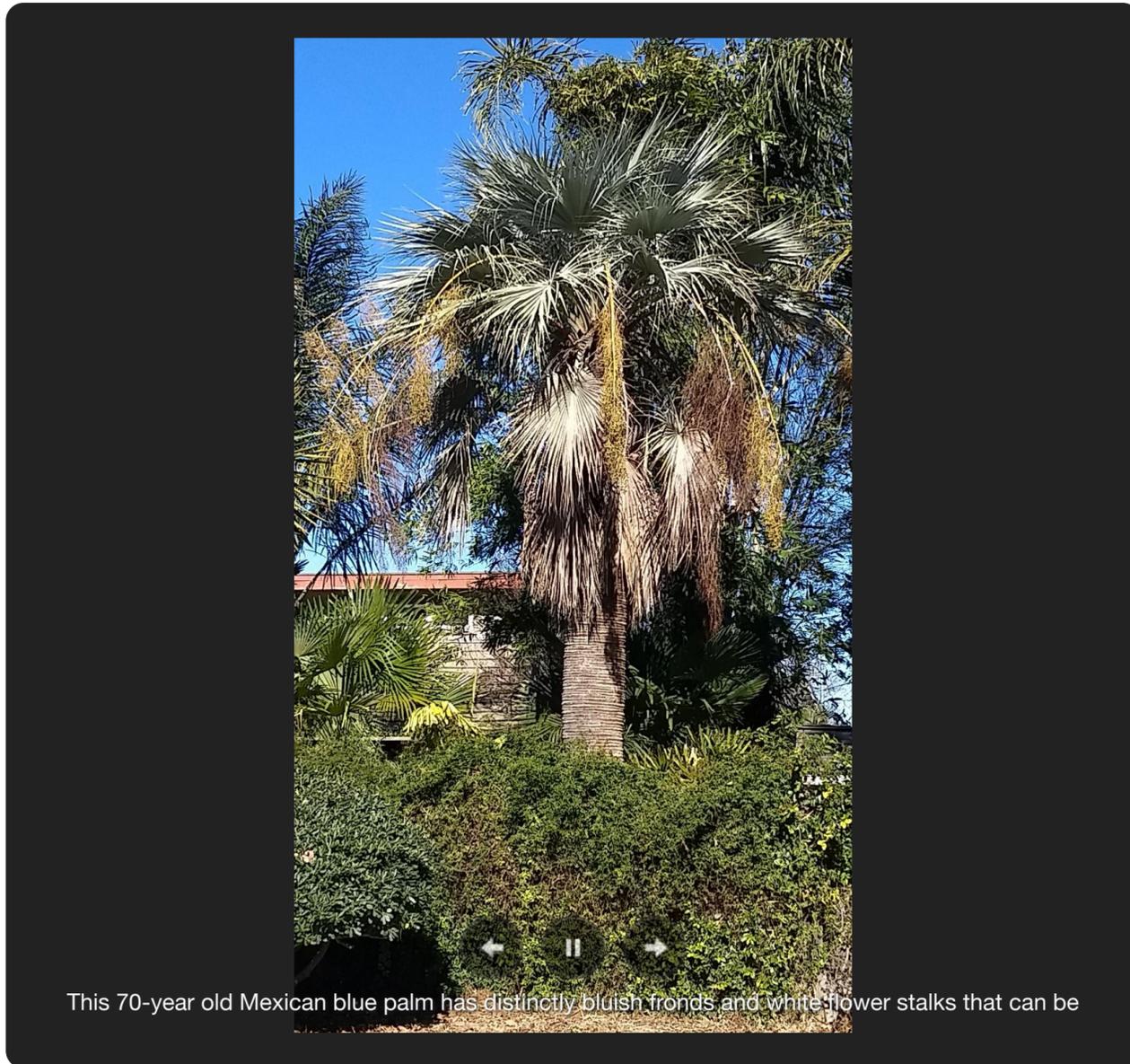
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YOLO COUNTY NEWS

Features

Great Tree Search: Check out these unusual species

By Special to The Enterprise



The Mexican weeping pine at 1140 Dartmouth Place has a gorgeous spreading crown and drooping tufts of needles. It is drought resistant and merits increased use in Davis. Courtesy photo

Several trees were nominated this year in the Great Tree Search because they are rarely found in Davis.

Sweet olive is a good example. It is an evergreen shrub or small tree native to Asia with extremely fragrant flowers that smell like ripe peaches. Although very popular in Japan and China where it is the “city tree” of several municipalities, it is unusual in Davis.

The sweet olive was planted by the late Dr. Andrew Leiser at his home on 939 Pecan Place and has grown into a 30-foot-tall tree. Leiser was one of the finest plantsmen in California and studied woody plants with horticultural potential. Sweet olive was one of these. With a girth of nearly 4 feet, this tree is enormous for its kind, and when in flower its delicious scent permeates the neighborhood.

The Mexican evergreen oak planted by the late UC Davis professor John Tucker is another one of Davis’ arboreal legacies. Tucker was a world-renowned oak expert whose research led to the Shields Oak Grove at the UCD Arboretum. Oddly, in Davis this species is only found in the backyard of his former residence at 1324 Torrey St. Its acorns are prized by collectors. The tree is 50 feet tall, with a 30-foot spread and 4.5-foot girth. Its interesting foliage, drought tolerance and resistance to disease and pests make it a good choice for contemporary landscapes.

Paul Kelley’s backyard contains palms from around the world, but the Mexican blue palm is his pride and joy. This 70-

year-old tree was transplanted by crane (it weighed 10,000 pounds) seven years ago from a site in West Sacramento. Now it is 30 feet tall and the stout trunk has a girth of 6.1 feet. It is believed to be the largest of its kind in Davis.

The Mexican blue palm is known for its distinctly bluish fronds and white flower stalks that arch well beyond the crown. This fan palm is native to Baja California and drought tolerant.

At 648 D St. there is a tree that goes unnoticed except when it flowers. The 35-foot-tall orchid tree has died back from cold snaps and sprouted several times. The four scarred stems are testaments to its tenacity. In spring, the light pink orchid-like flowers are spectacular and their fragrance intoxicates. A wonderful watercolor painting by local artist Marie-Therese Brown aptly captures the delicate beauty of these flowers. The twice lobed leaves are interesting as well. This Great Tree is truly a hidden gem.

Austrian pine is not common in Davis, and the one at 1132 Dartmouth Place is uncommonly large. According to Grace Hodgson, the tree is nearly 60 years old. Its spreading canopy and dark-colored bark make the front yard stand out. This specimen is 70 feet tall and has a girth of 5.5 feet. It is home to many birds, squirrels and, occasionally, raccoons.

Next door at 1140 Dartmouth Place is a beautiful Mexican weeping pine. Although not as tall (55 feet) as the Austrian pine, this tree has a gorgeous spreading crown (48 feet) and drooping tufts of needles. The stout trunk (6.5-foot girth) and feathery foliage are very attractive. Native to the highlands of Mexico, the Mexican weeping pine is quite drought resistant and merits increased use as an ornamental tree in Davis.

One of the most visible trees in Davis is the Paradox walnut that stands in front of the Davis Lutheran Church at 317 E. Eighth St. Its enormous branches defy gravity, sweeping downward and then lifting upward to the sky. The crown spreads 90 feet, greatly exceeding its height (65 feet). This tree was probably planted by active congregation member Harold Forde who, along with Eugene Serr, began the walnut breeding program at UC Davis in 1948. Luther Burbank produced the first Paradox walnut by cross-pollinating the native black walnut with English walnut. He named it Paradox because it displayed traits uncommon to both parents, such as rapid growth, few walnuts and very strong wood.

— *Submitted by Dr. Greg McPherson, a member of the Tree Davis Board of Directors and retired US Forest Service urban forest researcher. This project is made possible by support from Tree Davis sponsor Symphony Financial Planning. These and other stories on what made each tree special were captured in a series of Davis Enterprise articles that can be found at the Tree Davis website: <http://www.treedavis.org/programs/great-tree-search/>.*