

## **Welcome to the Fountaingrove II OSMA Email Newsletter!**

Welcome to the first of many planned Fountaingrove II Newsletters prepared with our newly installed MailChimp software and distributed electronically!

The OSMA is taking steps to operate more efficiently and improve communications to its association members. It is revamping its website and has built an official e-mail consent list to provide online communications to its members, including newsletters. Thank you for being part of that effort!

### **Sudden Oak Death**

Sudden Oak Death, a disease that kills several oak species by attacking the vascular system, is present in Fountaingrove II. It is spread by several host plant species (rhododendron, camellia, manzanita, toyon, etc.) to the oaks, but is mostly spread by the California bay laurel. On the host plants the pathogen is just a foliar problem. It sits on the leaves and never gets into the vascular system. Unfortunately, that's not the case for the oaks, and except for very rare cases Sudden Oak Death is fatal.

Since 2012, OSMA has been spraying many of our open space oaks that are susceptible to Sudden Oak Death (coast live oaks, black oaks and their hybrids) with immune boosters in hopes of lessening the effects of the disease on our beautiful and important oak woodlands. Each year between Halloween and Christmas, volunteers have been flagging and documenting coast live oaks and black oaks to be treated by the Hitmen Termite & Pest Control, Inc. with a combination of Agri-Fos (immune booster) and Pentra-Bark (helps penetrate the bark). What started as a project of about 400 trees has expanded significantly. This past December, over 940 oaks were sprayed.

OSMA has kept abreast of Sudden Oak Death research, prevention theory and treatment, and has been working to try to keep our most prized oak woodlands healthy for future generations. Board members and volunteers have attended seminars, listened to our urban foresters and pored over the latest scientific documents. These days, tree specialists believe that the deciduous trees, like our black oaks, may benefit from spraying in the springtime rather than in the fall because of the way their vascular systems work. So, this year OSMA made the move and broke off the deciduous oaks from the evergreens and sprayed about 150 black oaks in April. Again, volunteers did all the prep of locating and flagging the oaks so the spray crew could locate the target oaks. The volunteers also cleaned up afterward, removing the flagging and verifying the trees that were sprayed.

This coming fall, the 800 or so coast live oaks that are tagged for spraying will be treated. If you'd like to get involved to help with this project, please contact Kim

involved to help with this project, please contact Kim Nielsen-Glynn at [glynn@sonic.net](mailto:glynn@sonic.net) and we'll keep you informed.

## **Weed Abatement Ongoing**

The trimming of weeds and grasses is into its third week on OSMA and park properties. The crews have had trouble with grasses remaining green longer this season because of all the late rains, so they have been targeting areas with dry grass first and moving the greener areas further down the schedule.

Labor has also be difficult to keep, as the work is grueling, less taxing work is plentiful elsewhere, and laborers are scarce. In any event, the work will continue until all the acreage scheduled to be cut (over 116 acres!) has been treated.

**Remember, your own property needs to be kept weed-free and fire-safe all season long beginning on June 1st.** Do your part to keep you, your family and your neighborhood more defensible if a firestorm should erupt. An event like the Valley Fire is all too possible where we live.

## **Doom the Broom**

Broom is a common term for several species of plant that originated in Europe or North Africa and have become terrible invasive problems in California and other places. In Fountaingrove II, we find that French Broom (*Genista monspessulana*) and Spanish Broom (*Spartium junceum*) are most common. Broom can easily take over native plant colonies with their aggressive growth habits, providing little to no wildlife value (habitat or forage). As a matter of fact, broom can be toxic to animals. Their seed pods explode releasing thousands of potential new plants and their seeds remain viable for many years. One Spanish broom plant can produce 10,000 seeds just in one season.

Moreover, broom is a fire hazard, and in our Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, we don't need more of that type of problem.

OSMA has several weed wrenches which were purchased for broom removal a few years ago. This spring, volunteers eagerly pulled broom from Fountaingrove Parkway behind Heathfield Place and other areas while the ground was still damp enough to release the roots. Where larger plants still exist, OSMA will probably have to cut the plants at their bases and apply an herbicide directly onto the fresh cuts to kill the plants. Where seedlings exist, a combination of judiciously applied herbicides and cutting should suffice.

Local big box stores still carry a type of broom (usually called "Sweet Broom") each spring. They claim the

called Sweet Broom, each spring. They claim the plants are sterile and will not reproduce. Well, Oregon and Washington have both banned the sale of broom, so maybe they know something that California is ignoring.

Eradicating broom will be an ongoing battle for many years to come. Should you find any of these plants with bright yellow blooms in spring among your landscape, find another more appropriate plant to replace it.

## **Tree Work**

With all the rains (60"! ) this past winter, several trees that had been weakened by years of drought became dangerously unstable, which kept the OSMA on its toes!

We lost a few black oaks, unfortunately. Oaks are long-lived, fire-resistant and important to the native habitat. They support over 300 other species, including birds, mammals, reptiles, fungi, microbes, etc. All these living organisms depend on each other to survive and thrive. With the invasion of Sudden Oak Death threatening our oaks, the loss of a few to uprooting is just that much more disturbing.

Also imperiled were many Douglas-fir trees. Happily, the loss of Douglas-firs is not as significant to our forests. They usually grow too close together to allow

enough water and nutrients for proper health, they are relatively short-lived, and they don't provide the habitat value that oaks do.

Several Douglas-fir trees that we lost were growing at the bottom of Hadley Hill Drive. When the development was built, most of the drainage was directed onto this one area, creating more water flow into a concentrated stream. The trees growing there, probably since 1964 after the Hanley Fire, have endured several years of "wet feet" and silt diversion. This year was the last straw for some, as a couple of them toppled into other trees and had to be cut to the ground.

The tree experts from Urban Forestry Associates identified several more trees that were in danger of falling there, so OSMA had those trees brought down, and there are more to come.

Because of the late winter timing of the tree failures, OSMA was left in a pickle. The trees that were an imminent danger to life and property had to be brought down, which was done, but the wet ground was too soft for a chipper to reach the area of work and having the crew drag debris up the hill would create ruts and erosion problems in the delicate earth there. When the ground becomes dry enough, habitat season is in full swing and we cannot do tree and chipping work at that time (mid-February through mid-August), so the debris from bringing down the trees will remain on the ground until the end of habitat season. It's not an ideal situation, but it seemed the

season. It's not an ideal situation, but it seemed the best solution for long-term stability of the area.

## Habitat Trees

Have you ever seen a funny looking tree with short branches and no greenery standing tall in the open space? It's probably one of our many habitat or wildlife trees.

Habitat trees serve an important purpose in our open space, providing food sources and homes for birds and mammals, acting as lookout perches for raptors and other birds, and eventually breaking down and nourishing the soil.

The OSMA is obligated to provide two "snags" per acre in our 200+ acres of open space. By manicuring dead or otherwise dangerous trees (firs that are "forked," for instance) into shorter towers with stubby branches, the decaying trees are less likely to cause any damage or harm as they slowly decay.

If you have one or two behind your home, you're likely to spy hawks, turkey vultures, woodpeckers (acorn and pileated), owls, doves, turkeys, crows, etc. Enjoy!

## Want More Information?

You can always check out [www.fountaingroveii.com](http://www.fountaingroveii.com) to find what you need!

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