

FOUNTAINGROVE II

The OSMA Newsletter is published quarterly by the Fountaingrove II Open Space Maintenance Association.



Not the brilliant displays of nearby vineyards, but the rich fall colors in our open space are all home grown.



What is our attraction to trails?

There's a part of our modern being that is decidedly primitive. For all our mind-numbing advances and the miracles we carry in our pockets, few if any stir the emotions as does a trail winding off into the wilderness, that irresistible need to know what's beyond the bend. Exploring is instinctive be it the trails in our Open Space wildlands or our own psyche. Page 4.



Where do all the birds sleep?

Whatever you answered, you're likely to be wrong. End of a busy work day, time to kick back and grab a little shut-eye. But it's not that easy when you appear on the menu of so many predators. Plus you're trying to be a good parent, providing for the kids, and keeping encroachers at bay. So when you need to snooze, what's a hard-working bird to do? See page 7.



Harvest in the Open Space!

Any idea how many critters depend on acorns and oak trees for their survival? Neither do the experts. When you consider all things great and small that rely on oak trees for everything from nutrition and shelter to vital symbiotic relationships, the number is in the hundreds or even thousands. And acorn harvest is a major event for all. See page 8.

The rich history of our hills and the critical need for OSMA today.

If you could wander back not that many years ago to these wild, undeveloped hills serving as pasture and vineyard land, you'd see the importance of what OSMA is charged with preserving for future generations. The march of progress is relentless but forward thinking can ease the long term effects. See OSMA, page 6.



Calling All Volunteers:

We've secured a grant to fund the replanting of an oak wood land along Parker Hill Road. Planting date is October 29. To volunteer, email Leslie at leslie@focus-re.com.

Being a Fire Wise community involves every one of us.

The OSMA exists to assure that all necessary steps are taken to preserve the health and integrity of our Open Space as viable habitat *and* protect our community from the threat of uncontrollable wild fire.

This involves all of us. More on page 3.





FIELD WORK

Board members meeting on site where 200 oak trees will be replanted October 29, re-establishing a hillside woodland lost to the fire in 2017. **Volunteers are needed.** Tools, lunch and beverages will be provided as will instructions for planting the one gallon trees. Email: leslie@focus-re.com.

From the OSMA Board

This column displays questions, comments and suggestions from our members. Consider it a forum.

Restoration of Rincon Ridge Park continues. Estimated completion November 1.

Santa Rosa's extensive recovery work at Rincon Ridge Park is progressing with irrigation installed and preparation work underway for a new lawn. Expanded fencing and a pathway around the native plant preserve enlarges the protected area maintained by the California Native Plant Society. Entire park completion is scheduled for November 1.

Nagasawa Community Park on Fountaingrove Parkway, current update:



Our cover feature last issue prompted SR City Parks and Traffic Engineering to design and install signs in both directions alerting passers by of the park's location – in record time. The replacement of the monument sign that burned is still a work in progress. Much appreciation for their quick response in support of our support. FYI: Fishing is said to be great.

If you have a question, comment, photograph or a discovery made here in our Open Space, please share. Email: leslie@focus-re.com

The OSMA Newsletter is a quarterly publication of the Fountaingrove II Open Space Maintenance Association as a service to our members. Questions or suggestions are always welcome. Email leslie@focus-re.com. Be sure to visit Fountaingroveii.com

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

With our clean up phase complete, we turn to restoration.

As we transition to Fall, the focus of the Association also changes. We're making the big push to complete the clean-up of the last remaining area of standing dead trees and brush burned during the Tubbs Fire. Upon completion of this Eastern Area, all of the OSMA burned areas will have been cleared at least once — a major accomplishment for the Association.

Unfortunately, trees throughout the OSMA areas continue to die, either from stress induced by the Tubbs fire or for other reasons. These trees will be reviewed by an Arborist and a decision made to either remove or convert to a habitat tree.



Cutting and chipping dead trees on a foggy morning east of Rocky Knoll, completing the final phase of our post-fire clean-up. We now turn to restoration and fire prevention.

Some of the normal seasonal maintenance activities include: identifying landscape trees or shrubs that require replacement; cleaning debris from the miles of OSMA drainage systems; and the shutdown of irrigation systems, when the rain begins. And let us not forget the administrative activities, preparing and submitting mandated annual reports; updating several annual contracts; a tax audit and prepare a 2023 Budget. It's a busy time of year for the Association.

This is my cue to remind Members to **VOLUNTEER**. There are many opportunities and varied tasks, something for everyone. Our strength has always been our volunteers. Please contact Leslie Cohen at: Focus Real Estate & Investments, Inc., call 707-544-9443 x105 or email leslie@focus-re.com

Help Replant a Woodland!

The Board received a Grant to plant 200 trees on 13.5 acres of Wildland Area between Parker Hill Rd. and Crown Hill Dr. We have had a good response to our request for

volunteers to help plant trees, but we still need additional individuals to volunteer for the Saturday, Oct 29th planting day. Not available Sat, Oct 29th? There are pre-planting-day activities that need accomplishing. To sign up, contact Leslie Cohen, 707-544-9443 x105 or email leslie@focus-re.com.

A Little Fire Safety Could Save Your Home

As more and more houses are rebuilt in the fire areas and become occupied, we must keep our collective guard up relating to fire safety. Many of the rebuilt homes have hardscape up to the base of the house. This may appear a bit cold on the design front, but hardscape to the base of your house is there for a reason. Many of the houses lost in the Tubbs Fire Disaster were victims of vegetation against or in close proximity of the house. Remember shrubs, vines and trees against or close to a house along with wood fencing connecting a side fence to the house - is a fire's best friend.

Making small adjustments in your landscaping can make a big difference in the survivability of your home during a wildfire or a smaller localized fire. Your Association maintains defensible space and reduces fuel vegetation in the Open Space bordering homeowner lots. Homeowners need to maintain their individual home landscaping in a similar fashion to provide defensible space around their homes. We're proud to be an accredited Firewise Community and we encourage all of our members to practice fire safety around their home. Every defensible home makes ours a safer community.

*Bruce McConnell,
OSMA Board President*



Help replant this once robust woodland on Parker Hill Road. A community effort for the benefit of all, Sat Oct 29.

Just Being Out There

Of the many lessons a trail in the wild has to offer, none outweigh learning to live in the moment.

That strangely familiar connection you feel to an environment you've lost touch with — but not lost your need for.

You needn't be an ardent hiker to feel a tug on your sleeve when you pass a trail leading into a natural or even a wild setting. You might even make a momentary detour in your route-as-planned just to see what's out there — to satisfy your need to know for no apparent reason.

But there *is* a reason. We are, after all, animals and despite the reluctance of science to acknowledge such, our true nature remains a force within, influencing our thoughts and actions in unexpected and sometimes surprising ways. That trail you were drawn to, whatever your response, was a reminder that you are a part of the whole of the natural world.

Is it any wonder that hiking has grown to be the exercise of choice for so many. Whatever level of energy is devoted to being out there among the flora and fauna, the mere fact of your presence is inspiring in so many ways.

Walking is also a great form of exercise and areas such as ours offer much in terms of convenience and accessibility. Right outside your front door are miles of sidewalks and challenging hills — even street lights should you be an evening exerciser. Walking also can serve as conditioning for hiking, be it here or in any of the nearby county or state parks — or beyond .

Back to our trails through the wooded areas here in Fountain-grove, they primarily follow the firebreaks that are maintained as protection in the event of another wildfire. These trails are moderate at most in terms of difficulty, although venturing off-trail in some areas could be a challenge for those unaccustomed to more rigorous outings.

While hiking is mostly thought of as physical exercise, those who take the time to venture out among the wild things soon become aware of the deeper benefits.

Should you carry with you your daily thoughts and concerns, you will, without realizing, slowly shift your awareness to the goings on around you as they fill your present moment. Bird calls, scented breezes, the crunch of leaves beneath your feet, a deer you would not otherwise have noticed. Call it being one with nature or what you will, it is calming and healthful and always joyful beyond your expectations.

As mentioned previously, it's the board's intent to make available maps of our existing trails, and proposed secondary trails with access points. Not surprisingly, your five member all-volunteer board needs some help to pull this off. Something in the form of a trails committee to help with planning and execution is needed. If you find this of interest, please email Leslie at leslie@focus-re.com.

Get to know our Open Space. Discover what being in the moment can be by being there.



Whatever time of year, a hike through a quiet woodland can do much for mind and body as well as that spirit within that loves to connect with nature. We have so many resources nearby plus our own trails.



The Background of OSMA

The rich history of these hills and the critical role OSMA must play in open space management today.

Our OSMA was created in response to the ongoing impact of urban development.

Where do we begin to establish a history where the subject is timeless. For eons these lands were home to the Southern Pomo who cared for and understood them in ways never to be repeated as overpowering cultures took control.

Mexican rule assumed and subjugated these naturally evolving lands, seeing them only for their agricultural and cattle raising potential. Grants of large tracts were awarded those with familial or political connections. One such recipient was William Mark West who came to Sonoma in 1832 having married Guadalupe Vasquez, a niece of General Mariano Vallejo, Military Commander of the region.

Rancho San Miguel was 6,663 acres comprising the lands from Mark West Creek to Santa Rosa Creek, the hills of our present day Fountaingrove among them. Mark West died in 1849 leaving ownership of the grant to his family.

Fast forward to 1875, Thomas Lake Harris arrived in Santa Rosa and purchased one thousand of these acres for his Brotherhood of a New Life, christened, "Fountaingrove." He would establish a winery as well to be overseen by young Kanye Nagasawa, his chosen successor. Eventually, with Harris' death in 1909, ownership of Fountaingrove would



pass to Nagasawa who expanded the property, the vineyards, and his own reputation as a master winemaker. His reign flourished till his own passing in 1934.

Nagasawa's natural heirs were denied the property through legal maneuvering and it was sold at auction to wealthy gold mine owner, Errol MacBoyle who maintained the winery at a high level, adding to his staff German immigrant, Hans Kornell, who later achieved his own winemaking fame.

MacBoyle later died and his widow, Gwendolyn, married German immigrant, Siegfried Becchold, a man of cattle baron dreams who in short order replaced the Fountaingrove vineyards with pastures and Hereford stock. But in the the early fifties, Becchold also died and Gwendolyn entered a nursing home. The property went to a caretaker. *More...*



Above: The legendary round barn of Fountaingrove Winery built by Kanye Nagasawa in 1899 as part of the utopian colony established by Thomas Lake Harris in 1875. Nagasawa eventually owned the property till his death in 1934.

Left: Next to own the renowned winery and vineyards was gold mine owner Errol MacBoyle and wife Gwendolyn. MacBoyle later died and Gwendolyn married Siegfried Becchold, a wannabe cowboy who replaced vines with cattle. The Beccholds on the Sonoma County Trailblazers wagon during a celebration.

The Background of OSMA *continued*

It was 1957 when Bob and Mickey Walter came from Wisconsin and purchased the by-then 2000 acre ranch from Gwendolyn's estate. They built a home, lived on the land and added polo ponies to their cattle herd. They were planning to develop their property to include a large residential community. Mickey died in 1972 and it was shortly after, an initial proposal was submitted to the Santa Rosa city council. The eventual sales of Fountaingrove Ranch to developers occurred during the nineteen-seventies and eighties — but not without vocal opposition. Progress would prevail however, and these hills were transformed.

This background has been somewhat detailed but the point being made is, throughout the rich history of these hills, the land itself remained mostly unchanged but for its agricultural uses. Wildlife and native habitat continued with minor disturbance. It was not until development, with its disruptive reorientation from natural to urban landscape, that the land itself and the many native environments it supported was radically and permanently impacted.

The Impact of Development and Creation of OSMA

That impact was not unforeseen so as a mitigating gesture, it was proposed that areas unsuitable for building would remain as wildlife corridors and habitat, managed by a new organization with governing powers so as to prevent further degradation of the environment. That proposed entity became OSMA, the Open Space Maintenance Association.

Since its inception, the boards of directors of OSMA have proven themselves dedicated to their mission of preserving the remnants of this once pristine wilderness.

This story would be incomplete without more on the opposition referenced previously that warned of fire danger such as that which had occurred fifteen years prior in 1964. Originating in Calistoga, flames followed creek channels and canyons directly to the city limits of Santa Rosa. Those warnings were prophetic as was proven in 2017 when the Tubbs fire followed the same path and devoured most of Fountaingrove and northernmost Santa Rosa.

With that, OSMA assumed a dual role of wildfire prevention *and* recovery. These critical responsibilities have become the primary focus as we rebuild our community and way of life.



Your current OSMA board, as those before, takes every duty and action seriously from the preservation of native plants and wild habitat to defensive planning and preparation for future wildfire threats. The board consists of five volunteer members elected by our homeowners. Should you be interested in serving on the board, watch for notification of upcoming elections. More information is available on our OSMA website at fountaingroveii.com/index.php/about/



Above:

Volunteers replanting trees along Rincon Ridge Drive on April 21, 2018. Our next tree planting coming up on October 29 will be to reestablish a large primarily oak woodland along Parker Hill Road, part of the recovery aspect of OSMA responsibilities.

Left: Rare View of a Bygone Era

A frame from a 1975 Gaye LaBaron film on the ruins of Fountaingrove Winery. View is southwest from above and north of the round barn, near what is now Round Barn Blvd. There would soon be office buildings to the left and a Marriott Hotel to the right.

Our Fountaingrove Aviary

Where do all our back yard birds sleep? The answer may surprise you, in a number of ways.

Nothing is busier than the birds in your back yard so you can imagine how they look forward to getting a little shuteye.

Aside from their singing and those flitting moments you see them on your fence, then your lawn, on a tree branch, then they're gone, they seem always late for something.

So at the end of a busy day, where do they sleep? We like to imagine them in a cozy little nest settling in for a few hours of well earned down time.

Ah, but nests are strictly for eggs and rearing the young, so when nesting season is complete, the nests, being worse for wear, are no longer needed. Sleeping, or more importantly, where to sleep, is a spontaneous decision made nightly.



In the bird world, sleeping is called roosting and the criteria for where best to roost is always safety and warmth. Smaller birds are at greater risk and must stay off the ground to avoid cats or other roving predators. Being visible anywhere is to risk capture

by owls. Near the center of dense foliage or high among leafy tree branches is always the best protection.

But rarely are roosting spots completely secure so evolution has provided birds the unique ability to sleep with one eye



Above: A Song Sparrow has found a secluded perch for the night, assuring survival for another day.

Left: Hummingbird in a temporary state of torpor, or involuntary sleep to preserve energy — often seen hanging upside down from a branch or bird feeder.

open and one hemisphere of their brain awake. This talent: Unihemispheric Slow Wave Sleeping (USWS) allows a bird to rest and recover in deep sleep while remaining awake and alert to possible threats. It's believed they also use USWS to sleep while in flight as during lengthy night migrations.

One question often asked about roosting birds is, won't they fall from their branch when they fall asleep? But evolution took care of that as well by equipping their legs and claws with flexor tendons that provide an involuntary grip that activates upon landing and will not release until the legs straighten, as in take-off.



Little known is the fact that most migrating bird species travel at night, this to avoid attacks by hawks, falcons or other birds of prey who sleep during those dark hours. It's believed during these flights, birds will use their USWS to rest, even sleep while flying. Birds with exceptionally long migration routes will fly non-stop for days using their USWS to simultaneously rest and navigate while flying.

It's Acorn Season!

Our iconic oak trees, nothing says Sonoma County like an oak woodland and all that it provides.

Of the ninety or so oak species that exist across the country, we're celebrating our locals during their 2022 harvest.

With the acorn crop currently in the news, we're reminded of the crucial role oak trees play in feeding the forest. The annual acorn production is the most publicized but it's far from the extent of their generosity.

Nearly any wild animal you can mention benefits nutritionally year round from oak trees, from the leaves, twigs, bark, and wood, even when acorns are not available. Countless insects also feed on these items, inadvertently becoming food themselves for the larger foragers. Caterpillar species alone number in the hundreds.

In times past, acorns were a primary food source for the native tribes of California including the Southern Pomo, our predecessors in these hills. Where ancient stands of oak are still undisturbed, a sharp eye may spot a boulder with a recessed bowl shape where acorns were once ground into flour.

Today the wild inhabitants of our open space woodlands are the beneficiaries of these magnificent trees:

Valley Oak, most majestic of our oaks is found on valley floors or low areas where accumulated soil is deep and rich. Their leaves are dull green, deeply lobed with no sharp tips.

Black Oaks prefer moist, shady canyons or low lying areas. Their leaves are large and sharply tipped, with deep lobes.

Blue Oaks do well in hot, rocky areas and on ridges. Their leaves are blue-green, with no sharp tips and shallow lobes.

Coast Live Oak dominates this area and western Sonoma County, doing well in any environment. Its leaves are dark green, curved, with shallow lobes and sharp little spines.

Oregon Oak, like Valley Oak, prefers deeper soil and is often found sharing hillsides with Coast Live Oaks. Leaves are bright green and lobed but not sharply tipped.

Interior Live Oak grows equally well here in our coastal range, the interior valleys and the Sierra foothills. Thick leaves may have either toothed or smooth edges.



Black Oak (*Quercus kelloggii*)



Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*)



Blue Oak (*Quercus douglasii*)



Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*)



Oregon Oak (*Quercus garryana*)



Interior Live Oak (*Quercus wislizeni*)

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If you would like to sign up for email consent and receive this newsletter and other OSMA communications, contact Leslie Cohen at Focus Real Estate & Investments, Inc. 707-544-9443 x105 / leslie@focus-re.com



“The Wonder Seekers of Fountaingrove”

A reminder that Gaye LeBaron’s historical record of the mystical origins of our community is available for a \$15 donation to OSMA. Co-written with fellow historian Bart Casey, there is no more accurate accounting of our nineteenth-and early twentieth-century beginnings. Signed, hardcover copy, contact Leslie@focus-re.com.