



Honesty ♦ Respect ♦ Integrity

August 20, 2026

For Sonoma County Fire District, especially in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI), the goal is not necessarily to prohibit specific species, but to discourage planting trees that are highly combustible, accumulate volatile oils or resins, readily produce embers, or retain large amounts of dead material.

Below is a list consistent with recommendations from CAL FIRE, Fire Safe Sonoma, and fire ecology research.

Trees SCFD Strongly Discourages:

Tree Species	Why Discouraged
Blue Gum Eucalyptus (<i>Eucalyptus globulus</i>)	Extremely high oil content, peeling bark creates long-range firebrands, heavy litter accumulation, explosive burning characteristics.
Monterey Pine (<i>Pinus radiata</i>)	Highly resinous needles and cones, ladder fuels, significant ember production.
Bishop Pine (<i>Pinus muricata</i>)	Dense resin, prolific cone production, crowns readily torch.
Monterey Cypress (<i>Cupressus macrocarpa</i>)	High volatile oils, dense branching traps dead material.
Italian Cypress (<i>Cupressus sempervirens</i>)	Vertical fuel arrangement acts like a chimney; ignites easily and burns intensely.
Leyland Cypress	Dense evergreen foliage, difficult to maintain free of dead interior branches.
Arizona Cypress	High resin content and rapid fire spread potential.
Junipers (<i>Juniperus</i> spp.)	One of the most flammable landscape plants; explosive ignition.
Cedar species (<i>Cedrus</i> spp.)	Resinous needles, dense crowns, ember generation.
Incense Cedar (<i>Calocedrus decurrens</i>)	High resin levels, retains dead material.
Acacia species	Fine fuels, oil-rich foliage, rapid fire spread.
Pepper Tree (<i>Schinus molle</i>)	Fine foliage and heavy litter; burns readily when dry.
Scotch Broom (tree-form varieties)	Extremely flammable oils and fine fuels.
Tree of Heaven (<i>Ailanthus altissima</i>)	Invasive, forms dense stands, contributes to fire spread.



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Trees That Require Careful Management

These species can perform reasonably well if properly maintained, but become hazardous when neglected.

Species	Concerns
Douglas Fir	Dead lower limbs become ladder fuels.
Redwood	Mature trees are fire-resistant, but dense lower branches and accumulated duff increase hazard.
Coast Live Oak	Generally good, but dead limbs and ivy increase risk.
Valley Oak	Good fire resistance when healthy and limbed.
Black Oak	Moderate fire resistance with maintenance.

Trees Generally Considered More Fire Resistant

No tree is "fireproof," but these tend to have:

- High moisture content
- Low resin
- Broad leaves
- Open branching
- Less litter accumulation

Examples include:

- Coast Live Oak
- Valley Oak
- Oregon White Oak
- California Sycamore
- Bigleaf Maple
- Western Redbud
- California Buckeye (away from structures due to seasonal leaf drop)
- Dogwood
- Crape Myrtle
- Ginkgo
- London Plane Tree
- Chinese Pistache
- Ash species (where appropriate)

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SCFD discourages the installation of highly flammable tree species within developed areas, particularly within the first 100 feet of structures. Species known to produce excessive ember cast, volatile oils or resins, heavy litter accumulation, or dense ladder fuels—including eucalyptus, juniper, cypress, and resinous pine species—should be avoided in favor of lower-flammability, well-maintained native or adapted broadleaf trees. Selection of appropriate vegetation is an important component of defensible space and home hardening.

Additional Best Management Practices

Regardless of species, wildfire risk is greatly reduced by proper maintenance:

- Maintain 10 feet of horizontal clearance between tree crowns (or more on slopes).
- Remove dead branches, leaves, and accumulated litter annually.
- Prune lower limbs to create 6–10 feet of vertical clearance (or one-third of tree height for younger trees).
- Avoid planting trees beneath roof eaves, decks, or within the Zone 0 ember-resistant area adjacent to structures.
- Keep tree canopies separated from chimneys, roofs, and power lines.
- Remove dead or declining trees promptly before they become significant fuel sources.