

# University of California

## Agriculture and Natural Resources

Making a Difference for California



# *The Green Scene*

## Meetings and Announcements

### Next Horticultural Tour—Spain and Portugal, May, 2025

Thanks for your inquiries and emails. In cooperation with Travel Gallery of Pasadena, I offer an upcoming educational opportunity, a horticultural tour to northern Spain and northern Portugal. The dates are May 11 – May 23, 2025. This will be the twelfth horticultural tour in our series. Right now we are at 50% of the number of signups needed for a quorum and to make this trip a go.

For a detailed itinerary, please use the link to connect with Travel Gallery at <https://www.travelgallery.com/horticulture-spain-2025>

The itinerary features at least two nights in all hotels, and much less driving with more free time than our previous hort tour to the UK. The tour begins at Madrid Barajas airport, moves to the north, moves to the west to the famous pilgrimage site of Santiago de Compostela, and then turns south to northern Portugal.

We envision the southern California group traveling together from LAX to Madrid, leaving Sunday, May 11, with arrival early afternoon Monday, May 12.

Expect good food.

Expect interesting plants and design. As we found in our previous hort tour to Spain, I know of no other country that handles large public spaces, e.g., squares and boulevards, as well as the Spanish. And we always learn something about plant selection, often applicable to our own landscapes.

I want to thank Frank Fish and Travel Gallery for taking on this project as an educational endeavor. We have always been one of the smaller or smallest groups they handle.

I will also like to mention that I intend to offer a horticultural tour to Japan in spring, 2026. Japan has superb examples of garden design, and one of the world's premier rose gardens is there, which I visited in 2009 as part of an international rose symposium.

### Master Gardener Program

A Master Gardener Coordinator has been hired and he begins Oct. 28. I think it unlikely we will offer MG classes this fall, but more likely January / spring 2025.

If you are interested in becoming a Master Gardener, whenever that happens, you may call our office, 661 868-6200, or email [cekern@ucdavis.edu](mailto:cekern@ucdavis.edu), and ask to be put on the list for contact when the MG classes begin. We already have several people interested.

## Webinar for Landscape Professionals

An announcement from our statewide group. Note that three hours of PCA credit can be had, AND this webinar is free if you complete the needs assessment survey. Such a deal.

# Webinar for Landscape Professionals

**Join us for a 3-hour webinar, exclusively for professional landscapers in California.**

**When:** October 29, 2024 from 9:00AM to 12:15PM

**Who:** Landscape professionals, groundskeepers, maintenance gardeners, and others who manage landscapes for hire or as part of their employment.

### DPR CEUs

Three (3) hours of continuing education units, including one (1) hour of Laws & Regs.

### Topics

1. Pesticide Safety for Urban Landscapers
2. Weed Identification and Control
3. Invasive Pests: What Landscapers Can Do

**Waive the \$30 registration fee by completing a 10-minute needs assessment survey included on the registration form.**

**Register now!**



## Pruning Shade Trees

I suppose I need to say something about this.

Autumn days bring cooler temperatures, fall color development in the landscape, and the sound of chain saws echoing through city streets. Although shade trees may be pruned in autumn as a matter of routine, pruning should not be considered an annual necessity, especially if structure has been established when trees were young. Many shade trees will grow well without annual pruning, and severe pruning is damaging to most tree species. The first question to ask before pruning is “Why?” Pruning should proceed only if specific reasons exist and clear goals have been established.

Pruning may be required for the following reasons:

- **Structure:** Shade trees should have a central leader with scaffold branches spaced one to three feet apart. Branches should have wide angles of attachment to the trunk. Competing branches should be removed. Establish a dominant leader by shortening competing leaders, especially in young trees.
- **Health:** Diseased, damaged or rubbing branches can be removed.
- **Safety:** Branches which pose a hazard should be removed. Examples are branches that interfere with driver visibility at street corners and those which hang low over sidewalks. The sail area of trees may also be reduced to lessen the chances of uprooting during windstorms.
- **Appearance:** Many trees have interesting trunk and scaffold forms. Exposing the form of the tree can enhance its appearance. Trees that have been pruned correctly retain a ‘natural’ appearance and often don’t obviously look as though they have been pruned.

Two types of pruning cuts, *heading* and *thinning* cuts, should be used. These have opposite effects on tree structure, and in most situations pruning should be done with a combination of both. A heading cut shortens branches and removes the terminal bud. The terminal bud (at the end of a branch) is dominant (apical dominance) and governs growth of laterals. If the terminal bud or shoot is removed, lateral buds will break and lateral branches will grow faster; therefore, bushy growth results. Heading main branches to the same point every year, as is often done with mulberries, is known as pollarding. The resulting numerous branches are weakly attached and do not extend to great height nor block out much sky. In northern Europe, sunlight is at a premium and pollarded trees provide ornament in city squares. However, pollarding dwarfs trees and limits shade, and some species can be killed outright by this practice. The popularity of the pollarding style in Bakersfield is perhaps a triumph of tradition over thinking.

A thinning cut removes a smaller branch at the place of attachment to a larger branch. Thinning opens the tree crown while retaining larger limbs, and preserves a “natural” appearance of the crown. Many trees, including pines, oaks, and magnolias, respond poorly to heading cuts and new branches originate with difficulty. These tree species, especially, should be thinned and not headed, if pruned at all. Keep the central leader and key structural branches to preserve a framework within the tree crown.

The placement of the pruning cut directly affects how much decay may later occur in the trunk. Trees do not have a healing process comparable to what occurs in animals or people. Damaged tissue is not repaired but rather sealed, i.e., compartmentalized, followed by growth of replacement tissue. The first line of defense of trees against decay fungi is a layer of tissue identified by the branch bark ridge, visible in some species as a raised collar close to the trunk around each branch. A cut should be made just outside this

ridge. The former practice of cutting branches as closely as possible to the trunk did produce callus growth, but the first line of defense was breached, allowing decay-producing organisms to enter. When a tree is topped, several lines of defense are breached, and direct entry to the heartwood of the tree is possible for decay fungi. Therefore, topping should be avoided unless absolutely necessary. If severe topping is necessary, perhaps tree removal is a better choice followed by replanting of a smaller species.



*On left: Dieback of a broken branch to the branch collar, the tree's natural line of defense, where a pruning cut should be made. On right: Well-pruned trees retain a natural appearance without obvious signs of pruning.*

## **Tree Care Accidents**

If you have pruning work done, make sure your contractor has safety equipment and insurance.

Below is a chart released by the Tree Care Industry Association showing fatal accidents from 2009-2013. We might suppose that for each fatal accident there were several others in the same category that were non-fatal. These data show the types of situations that must be avoided, whether working on trees at home or as a professional. As we might expect, falls are important causes of fatalities, and that includes from trees as well as from aerial lifts. Proper harnesses are a must! More numerous than falls are accidents resulting from being struck by trees or limbs. Once trees or branches begin to move it is difficult or impossible to change their direction and speed. When trees are being felled, the trunk often moves in unpredictable directions and the butt end may jump backwards or sideways when the top of the tree hits the ground. It is best to take trees down in small pieces. Although many California neighborhoods have underground utilities, overhead wires are dangerous. Planting of smaller species under wires is sensible so that pruning will be infrequent or not necessary at all.

Graph of fatal tree care accidents, from the article by Juan Barba, *Southwest Trees and Turf*, May-June 2014,20(4):5.

### Fatal Tree Care Accidents, 2009-2013

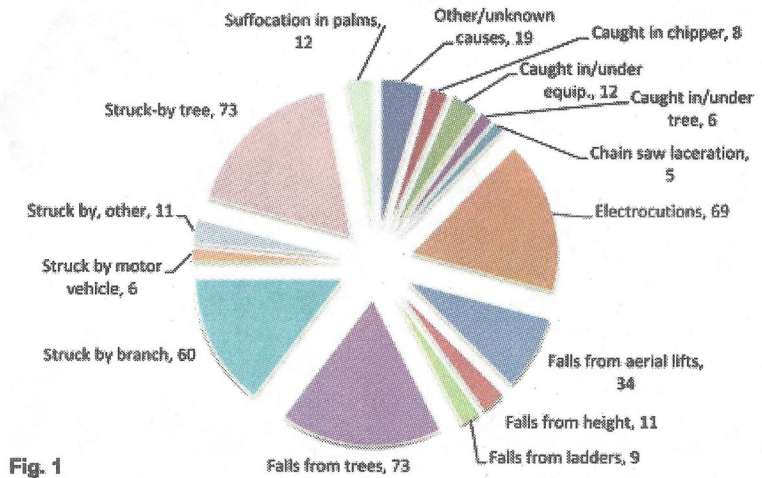


Fig. 1

*John Karlik*  
*Environmental Horticulture/Environmental Science*

**Disclaimer:** Discussion of research findings necessitates using trade names. This does not constitute product endorsement, nor does it suggest products not listed would not be suitable for use. Some research results included involve use of chemicals which are currently registered for use, or may involve use which would be considered out of label. These results are reported but are not a recommendation from the University of California for use. Consult the label and use it as the basis of all recommendations.

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