

PRC 9-4-2025

Item No.4
Non-Native
Plants

Written
Communications

From: [Shani Kleinhaus](#)
To: [City of Cupertino Parks and Recreation Commission](#)
Subject: Item 4 on September 4 Agenda: Discussion on Non-Native Plants on Park Property Maintained by the City
Date: Wednesday, September 3, 2025 3:56:16 PM
Attachments: [SCVBA letter Non-Native Plants on Park Property.pdf](#)
[Attachment CUP Memorial Park Ponds removal email.pdf](#)

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Dear Chair Swamy and commissioners,
Please find our letter and attachment regarding Item 4 on your September 4 Agenda,
Discussion on Non-Native Plants on Park Property Maintained by the City.

Respectfully,

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September 3, 2025

To: Cupertino Parks & Recreation Commission

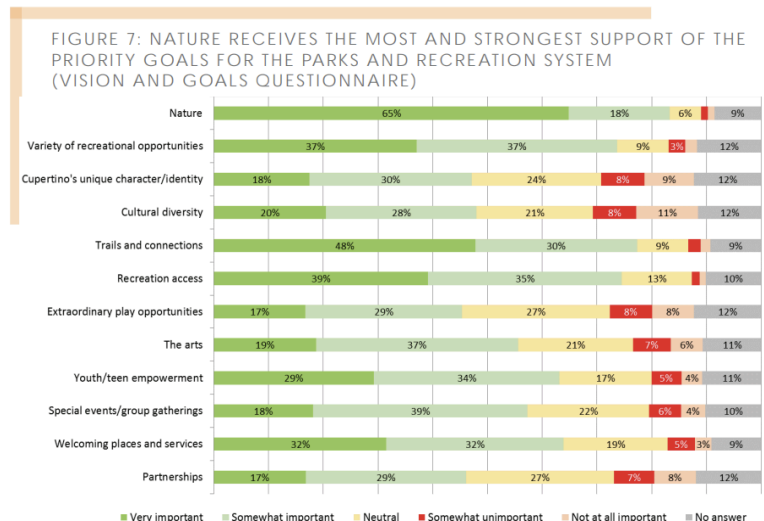
Re: Item 4 on 9/4 Agenda: Discussion on Non-Native Plants on Park Property Maintained by the City

Dear Chair Swamy and Commissioner,

The Santa Clara Valley Bird Alliance (SCVBA) was founded in 1926 and is one of the largest National Audubon Society chapters in California. Our mission is to promote the enjoyment, understanding, and protection of birds and other wildlife by engaging people of all ages in birding, education, and conservation. Located at McClellan Ranch, we are proud to call Cupertino home. We recently won recognition from Mayor Chao, in part for our role as a stakeholder in the development of the Citywide Parks & Recreation System Master Plan.

The Parks Master Plan Vision states, *“We aspire to create an inspiring, lively, healthy, diverse and sustainable community by connecting our residents to outstanding parks, **nature** and one another (emphasis added).*

Indeed “Nature” receives the most and strongest support of the priority goals for the Parks and Recreation System. Furthermore, residents expressed an interest in integrating nature into the park system. Cupertino has been carrying this priority forward in planning natural areas within parks and near creeks. But some park renovation efforts missed the opportunity to use our region’s diverse native plant palate and instead, used commercial plants of little ecological value (Memorial Park, for example, see attached letter).



Other planning efforts in Cupertino also support planting native plants. Action CS 2.1 of the city’s Climate Action Plan 2.0 states, *“Study opportunities to create new natural areas in existing open spaces,*

parklands, and fields with native species, biodiverse ecology, higher carbon sequestration potential and ecologically responsible recreation opportunities for the community."

In your discussion of Non-Native Plants on Park Property, we hope you consider:

1. Replacing Non-Native trees and shrubs with locally-native plants.
Native species support far more insects, birds, and pollinators than commercial ornamentals. Using them in parks restores ecological function and creates healthier, more resilient landscapes that require less water and chemical input over time.
2. Planting Narrow-leaf milkweed for Monarch Butterflies.
This species is adapted to our local climate and is essential for monarch breeding. Planting narrow-leaf milkweed supports healthy populations and contributes to regional conservation efforts.
3. Reducing mechanical maintenance
Frequent trimming and hedging can destroy habitat structure and disturb nesting wildlife. Reducing these activities can accommodate seasonal flowering and seed production to benefit birds, butterflies, and other pollinators while reducing fuel use and emissions.
4. Reducing or eliminating chemical applications of all biocides
Pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides harm beneficial insects, contaminate waterways, and degrade soil health. Reducing their use protects biodiversity and reduces risks to children and pets who use Cupertino's parks.
5. Allowing leaf litter to accumulate where possible.
Leaf litter improves soil fertility and water retention, provides shelter for beneficial insects and amphibians, and supports the natural decomposition cycle that urban parks often lack. Its a natural mulch!

We urge the Commission to take this opportunity to reaffirm Cupertino's leadership in ecological park management. Replacing non-native plants with ecologically valuable natives, and adopting thoughtful maintenance practices, will allow Cupertino's parks to thrive as vibrant, living landscapes that support biodiversity, respond to climate challenges, and enrich the daily lives of residents.

Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to nature in Cupertino's parks.







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Attachment: CUP Memorial Park Ponds removal email

To	ayanoh@cupertino.org
Cc	shani@scvas.org , mattm@cupertino.org , rachelles@cupertino.org
Bcc	
Subject	Plant list for Memorial Park Ponds Repurposing Project

Hi, Ayano,

It was nice to meet you virtually at Monday's Memorial Park Specific Plan Group Interview (A) meeting. I wanted to follow-up on the plan for the pond removals and the plant list that is in the blueprints. The screenshot below is from L2.1.

PLANT LIST				
1 135	TREES	BOTANICAL / COMMON NAME	SIZE	MUGOLS
	AGO FLE	AGONIS FLEXUOSA / PEPPERMINT TREE	24" BOX	LOW
2 135	SHRUBS	BOTANICAL / COMMON NAME	SIZE	MUGOLS
	CAL VIM	CALLISTEMON VIMINALIS 'LITTLE JOHN' / LITTLE JOHN WEeping BOTTLEBRUSH	5 GAL	LOW
	COL SUN	COLEONEMA PULCHELLUM 'SUNSET GOLD' / SUNSET GOLD BREATH OF HEAVEN	5 GAL	LOW
	DIE VEG	DIETES VEGETA / AFRICAN IRIS	5 GAL	LOW
	NAN HAR	NANDINA DOMESTICA 'HARBOUR DWARF' / HARBOUR DWARF HEAVENLY BAMBOO	5 GAL	LOW
	PHO PLA	PHORMIUM X 'PLATT'S BLACK' / PLATT'S BLACK NEW ZEALAND FLAX	5 GAL	LOW
	RHA Pnk	RHAPHIOLEPIS INDICA 'PINKIE' / PINKIE INDIAN HAWTHORN	5 GAL	LOW
	SAL LEU	SALVIA LEUCANTHA / MEXICAN BUSH SAGE	5 GAL	LOW
3 135	GROUND COVERS	BOTANICAL / COMMON NAME	SIZE	MUGOLS
		AGACIA REDOLENS 'LOW BOY' / LOW BOY BANK CATCLAW	5 GAL	LOW
		CISTUS SALVIFOLIUS 'PROSTRATUS' / SAGELEAF ROCKROSE	5 GAL	LOW
		COPROSMA KIRKII / CREEPING MIRROR PLANT	5 GAL	LOW
		COTONEASTER DAMMERI 'LOWFAST' / LOWFAST BEARBERRY COTONEASTER	5 GAL	LOW
		JUNIFERUS HORIZONTALIS / CREEPING JUNIFER	5 GAL	LOW
		LANTANA MONTEVIDENSIS / PURPLE TRAILING LANTANA	5 GAL	LOW

None of the plants are native to California, let alone our region. As I mentioned at the meeting, Heavenly Bamboo produces berries that are toxic to birds and dogs if eaten. I understand that this project is underway, but would it be possible to redesign the landscaping such that native plantings are used? This will align it with the future Memorial Park Specific Plan as well as the current Parks and Recreation System Master Plan, which encourages native plantings specifically at Memorial Park: "Consider natural vegetation enhancements as part of the Memorial Park Master Plan. Provide actionable items that include pollinator, habitat and/or native plantings in the upcoming Strategic Plan and/or Capital Improvement Program" (p. 108).¹

In terms of alternatives to the current non-native plant list, Mountain View's North Bayshore Precise Plan has a good plant palette that may be helpful ([link here](#)). A good substitute for the Heavenly Bamboo plant is Toyon, a native plant similar in size and production of (non-toxic) red berries.

Please let me know your thoughts. I would be happy to discuss further.

Regards,

¹ <https://parksmp.cupertino.org/Library/pdf/Jul20/final.pdf>

Annie Yang

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