

# REDWOODS

## Planted Where They Shouldn't Be



Redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*) have been in California for 20 million years and are endemic to California's coastal regions. Redwoods hold the title of "tallest tree in the world" with one specimen growing more than 300ft tall in its native habitat!

They have endured logging as the west coast population began growing, which spurred environmental groups to save the trees. Redwoods are revered for their majestic qualities in their natural habitat.

The sentimentality that society has towards redwoods has resulted in the trees being planted in conditions not suitable to their cultural needs. This also highlights the importance of not simply planting California natives,

which are decided by political boundaries, but rather by locally native plant communities.

For example, in the Bay area alone there are several different plant communities including riparian, wetland, and sagebrush scrub. These all contain plants that are adapted to their local conditions and will thrive without human intervention.

During the 1850s, the Gold Rush brought people to northern California, which created the need to build more houses. The redwood forests were convenient resources for timber but the forests were annihilated for logging. After WWII, which intensified the logging of redwoods, already 90% of old growth stands were gone.

### Material Quality

- Very stable as it maintains its cut form and does not significantly shrink or warp even with outdoor use
- Areas handled with saws and nails are just as decay resistant as an



In 1918 the Save the Redwoods League was founded to preserve the remaining publicly owned redwood stands. Unfortunately, private lands continued to be logged. Redwood National Park was established in 1968.



**Above** Strawberry Creek pre-Redwoods.

**Middle:** Strawberry Creek today. Note the invasive ivy on the right under the Redwoods.

**Below:** Natural Redwood habitat with fog.



The nostalgic inclination to save the redwoods by planting more was born from the over-exploitation of the trees and subsequent protection of them.

Now redwoods are planted in areas that are ill-suited for them. This does not promote healthy growth for the trees and also requires the intensive use of water resources. Redwoods thrive in foggy, coastal forests, especially along creeks.

In a case study of the beloved redwoods on UC Berkeley's campus, it is key to understand that the trees are not native to the historic campus ecosystem.

UC Berkeley's campus was designed around Strawberry Creek that runs from the hills above the stadium to the Bay. The campus's original ecosystem was an open Oak-Bay woodland.

The redwoods are not native to UC Berkeley's ecosystem and lack a crucial element to their ideal conditions: fog. Redwoods obtain most of their moisture from fog drip on the coast but San Francisco and Marin block the fog from reaching Berkeley.

The biggest problem is that the redwoods were planted along the creek and create a heavy shade. This microclimate is favorable to the invasive Algerian Ivy (*Hedera canariensis*) and makes it difficult for native plants to germinate.

Redwoods are a prime example of a California native tree that should only be planted in its native range, not anywhere within California. All plants would benefit from being planted in native conditions and will increase native plant life as well as conserve resources.



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