



OUR TOWN

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE TOWN OF LOS ALTOS HILLS

MARCH 2015



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The Doctor's Doctor

NATIVE VS NON-NATIVE TREE



VALLEY OAK

- Locally native
- No supplemental water needed
- Large number of species use it for food and shelter
- Stable standalone tree
- Provides shade in summer
- Leaves decay quickly, producing fertile soil
- Roots do not lift hardscape
- Low flammability
- Grows slowly
- Broad canopy



REDWOOD

- Coastal native, not in Los Altos Hills
- Summer water needed to keep the trees healthy
- Few species depend on it for food, some for shelter
- Depends on other trees to break the wind
- Provides deep shade in all seasons
- Branches decay slowly often forming deep duff layer
- Roots can lift buildings
- Highly flammable when stressed
- Grows rapidly with water
- Narrow and tall tree

Trees: Roots of the Community

Trees define places. In nature, the prevalence of trees or the dominance of a single species can determine the type of habitat found in an area, such as forest or oak woodlands. The functions trees provide to the environment are many, ranging from habitat and food to aesthetic or economic values — scientists call these “ecosystem services.” Trees provide these services in developed areas as well, though they are often modified along with the environment. As members of a rural community, residents of Los Altos Hills can simultaneously enjoy the benefits of trees in their natural state and in more developed, man-made settings. [CONTINUED ON PAGE 2]



Trees are the ultimate multitasker in nature, providing different ecosystem benefits from their leaves, branches, and roots.

Benefits of Trees

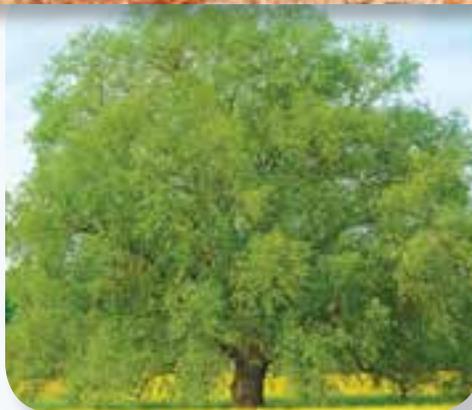
Trees are the ultimate multitasker in nature, providing different ecosystem benefits from their leaves, branches, and roots. Leaves use sunlight to produce sugars, creating a food source for herbivores and energy for the tree to grow. Branches and trunk support a diversity of biota while providing a means of storage for the tree. Roots anchor the tree for stability and contribute organic matter to enrich the soil as they decompose.

A common misconception is that tree roots grow very deep. Although taproots are found in some mature trees, roots generally extend only about three feet deep but they grow well past the canopy of the tree.

During storms, the entire tree facilitates groundwater replenishment. The top of the tree intercepts rain drops, reducing erosion of the soil surface and allowing rainwater to slowly trickle down past the roots. The value of this service can be seen in clear-cut forests where erosion occurs following the loss of tree cover.

Los Altos Hills residents have an advantage over homeowners of more urban communities because power line and hardscape conflicts are less common. In addition, the rural environment allows for smaller dead or dying trees that do not pose a danger to residents or structures to be left standing as “snags.” This provides a habitat for many organisms.

Larger trees provide greater benefits, so retaining mature trees in landscapes will maximize long-term benefits. Unfortunately, a group of California scientists reported discouraging news for the future of the state’s large trees. They found that drought, changes in land use, and fire suppression efforts have caused the number of trees larger than two feet in diameter to decline by 50 percent in the area surveyed. The



loss of large trees could exacerbate the global carbon situation, especially since many are hoping that forests will soak up more and more fossil fuel emissions.

Native Trees

Trees native to Northern California are well adapted to the local climate. Most can tolerate droughts and survive successive light freezes. One of the most common trees found in town is the oak tree. Before Europeans arrived in the area, Los Altos Hills was predominately covered by native oaks. These oak woodlands and savannas mixed with grasslands and chaparral in the uplands to produce the habitat for the native animals.

Oaks have a major role in these ecosystems because they support some of the largest numbers of species of any of the trees. Many insect species feed on oaks. These insects in turn attract bird species. The acorns are a major food source for bird and mammals.

Native oaks have large root systems. The young trees develop a deep tap root to get them through the dry summers. Once the tree has a deep root, a lateral root system grows well beyond the drip line. A healthy mature oak anchors the soil against erosion with the combination of deep and shallow roots. This root system is susceptible to change and damage. Increased summer watering, digging, filling and paving can cause the tree to deteriorate or die.

The most common species of California native oaks in Los Altos Hills are Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*), Blue Oak (*Quercus douglasii*), and Canyon Live Oak (*Quercus chrysolepis*). Each has preferred growing conditions. Coast Live Oak is the most abundant species locally and forms the foundation of our oak woodlands. The rounded, dark green contours of these majestic evergreen oaks are visible on every street in Los Altos Hills. Acorns and leaves support wildlife and enrich the soil. Valley

oaks like the valley bottoms that have deep, water-rich soils, while blue oaks like the shallow soils found in hills and other well-drained areas. Black oaks can grow in either location but will do best in areas that are colder in winter.

Other locally native upland trees include the madrone that grows in well-drained, sandy soils, and California bay laurel trees that do well on shady hillsides. The madrones produce fruit eaten by birds and mammals. Wildlife use bays for cover and nest sites, and its leaves and sprouts are a favorite deer food. In riparian areas, bays, willows, dogwoods, alder, elderberry, and buckeye thrive. Larger streams may support big-leaf maple, willows, and cottonwoods. Riparian trees provide critical erosion control, bank stabilization, and habitat for wildlife.

Care of Native Trees

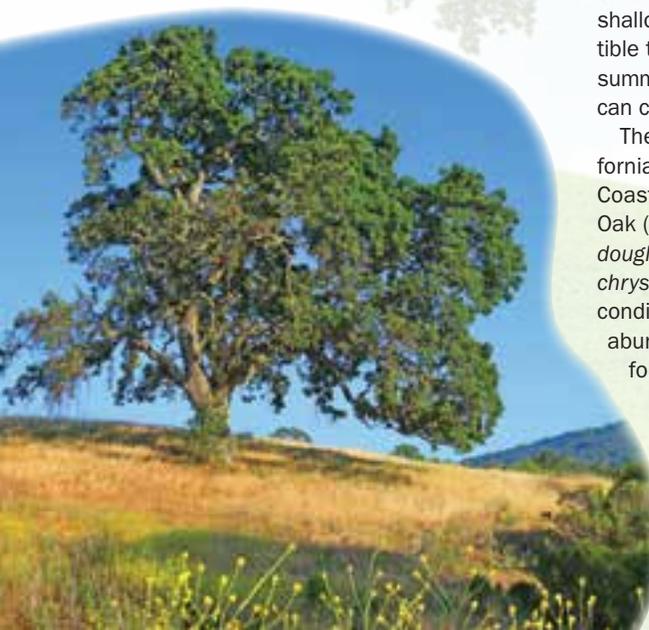
Trees native to Los Altos Hills have grown in the area for a long time without human intervention and are adapted to the soil and climate conditions. If planted, they will thrive with minimal upkeep as long as they are placed appropriately (e.g. a water-loving willow should be grown near a stream). Natives planted near homes may need initial care such as watering or pruning to enhance growth and establishment. Trees do self-prune in nature, but hazards can be reduced by structural pruning early in a tree’s life.

Coast live oaks should not be watered during the summer and lawns and other plants requiring irrigation kept well away from the trunk.

Non-Native Trees

Although non-native trees are prevalent in the nursery industry, there are disadvantages in choosing them over natives in rural communities. Few non-native trees provide a beneficial habitat to local wildlife and some can be invasive. Invasive trees seed freely and proliferate in locations where they are not wanted, crowding out native trees and vegetation and destroying habitat. Certain non-native species have a reputation for being hardy, a trait necessary in tough urban environments. The same traits that contribute to their success in urban environments contributes to their invasive potential.

Redwood trees are native to parts of California but not Los Altos Hills. They thrive in moist coastal fog and are dependent on summer fog drip. Unfortunately, these fast-growing redwoods have been planted throughout Los Altos Hills.



SUDDEN OAK DEATH



The current drought has stressed the redwoods and these trees can pose both fire and fall risks. Roots of redwoods are shallow and their habitat value to local species is low.

Trees that have high invasive potential and should not be planted in our area include eucalyptus (particularly blue gums), Russian olive, South American pepper trees, tree of heaven, Chinese tallow tree, and single seed hawthorn.

Eucalyptus trees, which are native to Australia, abound across California. Beginning in the 1850s, these trees were planted widely to beautify the landscape, provide medicine, fuel, and lumber, and



serve as windbreaks along roads and farm fields. The fast-growing eucalyptus, which can grow up to 40 feet per year, failed to meet expectations, and worse — proved to be invasive. It reproduces rapidly, crowding out other plants and preventing the growth of nearby plants by sequestering large amounts of water, robbing the soil of

nutrients, and producing compounds that inhibit growth of other species.

Eucalyptus leaves produce a highly volatile and combustible oil. The trees regularly shed their scaly bark and leaves, creating piles of flammable litter that can quickly carry fire up to the canopy. Once fire reaches the oil-rich air of the crown, a eucalyptus tree will explode, igniting surrounding trees and structures. In 1985,

Oaks in California are under serious threat from Sudden Oak Death (SOD), a disease caused by the invasive pathogen *Phytophthora ramorum*, which was brought here from abroad in the late 1990s on infected nursery plants. SOD has killed millions of native oaks in California — including many here in Los Altos Hills — and is continuing to spread.

The SOD pathogen can infect hundreds of different California native plant species, but is fatal only to certain types of oaks and tanoaks. California Bay Laurel trees are the major host-tree carriers here. Bays infected with SOD are not harmed by it, but can carry large amounts of the pathogen and spread it to oaks growing nearby.

In town, Coast Live Oaks are the trees most at risk of dying from SOD. Deciduous oaks, such as Blue Oak and Valley Oak are not susceptible. Unfortunately, Coast Live Oaks are the foundation of our local oak woodlands and often the largest and most beautiful specimen trees in more developed areas.

The SOD pathogen kills susceptible oaks by drilling through the bark and destroying the structures that carry nutrients through the tree. Infected oaks may continue to appear healthy for several years after infection, but eventually succumb. Symptoms may include reddish sap oozing from the bark, beetle infestations, or fungal growths. Eventually, the entire canopy of the oak turns brown, sometimes over a period of a just a few weeks or months — the origin of the notion of sudden oak death.

Oaks weakened by SOD infection can be hazardous and should be examined by a certified arborist. Because no treatments are available for infected oaks, preventing SOD infection is essential. Spraying oaks with phosphite solution and/or removing Bay trees that grow close to oaks may help prevent SOD infection. A certified arborist can help determine appropriate management.

Each year Dr. Matteo Garbelotto, a SOD researcher at UC Berkeley, organizes a “SOD BLITZ” in sites around the Bay Area to collect data about the distribution of SOD. Members of the public learn to identify SOD symptoms on Bay trees and collect leaves for testing at the Berkeley labs. The results are compiled in a map that shows where SOD infections occur and how the epidemic is spreading from year to year.

The 2015 SOD BLITZ in Los Altos Hills will be held on Saturday, May 2 at 1:00 pm at Town Hall. Residents are invited to help discover where SOD is spreading in our area. All materials and testing are free. Watch the town community calendar for further information. To learn more about SOD visit the UC Berkeley lab website: www.sodblitz.org.

a grass fire ignited a grove of eucalyptus trees along Liddicoat Lane in Los Altos Hills creating one of the town’s greatest disasters (see lower left photo). In a matter of minutes, the trees burst into flames, and spread the fire to the adjacent neighborhood, destroying 15 homes and causing more than \$9 million of damage.

Other hazards of eucalyptus trees are dropping limbs and toppling. Eucalyptus trees self-prune as they grow, dropping limbs weighing hundreds or thousands of pounds. Because of their height, large canopy, and shallow root system, eucalyptus trees are prone to topple over in wind storms. Road closures and downed utility lines caused by fallen eucalyptus trees occur every year in Los Altos Hills and in 2006 a cyclist was killed by a falling eucalyptus tree while riding along Natoma Road. In 2006, in response to the hazards that these trees present, the town enacted an ordinance to encourage the gradual removal of eucalyptus trees close to roads or homes. Other cities in California have enacted similar ordinances. To reduce the risk of power outages in town, PG&E has

removed all eucalyptus trees that threaten power lines.

Protecting Trees

The Town of Los Altos Hills helps protect valued local trees through the Heritage Oak Tree ordinance, which prohibits removal of significant oaks, and by requiring dedication of open space easements in areas with oak woodlands. The General Plan and ordinances requires that homeowners and planners give specific consideration to significant trees during the site planning and development process.

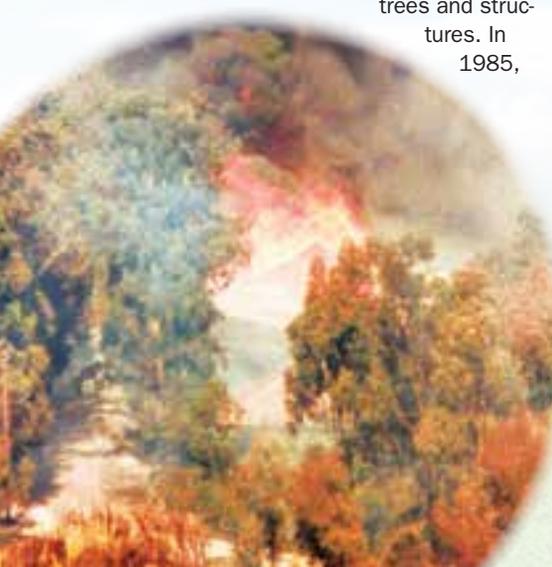
Story by Jennifer Tso, UC Davis Environmental Horticulture Graduate with contributions by Paul Heiple, Acterra Staff Biologist and General Naturalist; and Michael Hawkins, Program Director, Canopy.



TO LEARN MORE:

Visit the following websites to learn more about trees. Planting and caring for trees: <http://canopy.org/about-trees/canopy-tree-library/>

Invasive trees that should not be planted in town: www.cal-ipc.org/landscaping/dpp/plantpage.php?region=state&type=Trees



FROM THE CITY MANAGER

In calendar year 2014 there were 47 residential and commercial burglaries in Los Altos Hills. Since there are about 3,000 residential properties in town, this means that 1.5% of the homes were impacted by a property crime. In contrast, there were an average of 29.5 burglaries on an annual basis from 2003 to 2014.



However, 2014 marks the second year in a row that the annual number of burglaries has exceeded 40. In response to this increase, the Sheriff's Office has beefed up deputy patrols within the town. Two public crime prevention forums were held this past at Town



Carl Cahill

Hall attracting large audiences. The town and Sheriff's Office are also researching the feasibility of an automatic digital license plate reader (LPR) system similar to ones installed in Tiburon and Piedmont. License plate readers combine high-speed cameras that capture photographs of every passing license plate with software that analyzes those photographs to identify the plate number. Fixed-location LPRs are inconspicuously installed at key road entry/exit points. The purchase and installation of such a system would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars and there would be privacy and civil liberty issues to consider with the collection of such data. Such systems provide law enforcement with an additional tool for identifying burglary suspects.

The Sheriff's Office has developed a Residential Security Survey that is intended help residents systematically detect areas where their home security is weak.

Crime prevention does not necessarily have to come with a huge price tag and compromised privacy. There is much that residents can do to secure their homes and reduce their chances of becoming a crime victim. According to Assistant Sheriff Ken Binder, improving the security of one's home and possessions and deterring theft begins with a comprehensive analysis of the house, property, and one's personal habits.

| BURGLARIES IN LOS ALTOS HILLS | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| Year | Incidents |
| 2003 | 24 |
| 2004 | 21 |
| 2005 | 46 |
| 2006 | 32 |
| 2007 | 24 |
| 2008 | 33 |
| 2009 | 16 |
| 2010 | 18 |
| 2011 | 33 |
| 2012 | 18 |
| 2013 | 42 |
| 2014 | 47 |

To that end, the Sheriff's Office has developed a Residential Security Survey that is intended help residents systematically detect areas where their home security is weak. A copy of the Residen-

tial Security Survey can be downloaded from the town website (type "public safety alerts" in search box).

For those residents who would like a little more assistance in assessing their home security, the Sheriff's Office is also offering a new Security Survey service to residents, in which a Sheriff's deputy will come to your home and offer suggestions on basic security precautions.

Construction Time Limits Ordinance

On January 15, 2015, the City Council adopted an ordinance amending the Municipal Code to establish time limits for new construction projects. The new ordinance imposes financial penalties for property owners who fail to complete their building projects in a timely manner. Typically, a new residence is completed in two years or less from date of building permit issuance. The new ordinance allows up to three years before penalties would apply. There may be somewhat justifiable reasons for why the completion of a construction project is delayed. However, the City Council approved the construction time limits ordinance after hearing testimony from residents of certain neighborhoods impacted by long-running construction projects. Impacts to neighbors include extended periods of construction noise, dust, and construction vehicle traffic. A separate policy was also adopted that applies to building permits issued prior to January.

New Planning Director

After a thorough candidate search and interview process, Senior Planner Suzanne Avila was promoted to Town Planning Director in December. Suzanne has 24 years of planning experience working in hillside residential communities, including seven prior years with the town from 1993 to 1999. Suzanne has three nearly-grown children and in her spare time enjoys healthy outdoor pursuits, including hiking and nature photography.



SUNDAY,
JUNE 7

18TH ANNUAL LOS ALTOS HILLS

T TOWN
P PICNIC

The 18th Annual Los Altos Hills Town Picnic will be held on Sunday afternoon, June 7, 2015, from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at Purissima Park at Viscaino Road. Last year, over two thousand residents attended. The popular attractions from the last few years include the Classic Car Show, now in its ninth year, the Sheriff's helicopter, jump houses, magic shows, and more. The picnic is a great way to greet neighbors and fellow residents. The Town Picnic features a barbecue lunch served by volunteers. Soft drinks, beer, wine, and ice cream sundaes are also provided. There will be many canopy tents with tables and



chairs. This event will be held rain or shine.

The Picnic is organized by the Community Relations Committee, along with help from many residents who volunteer. We invite you to volunteer for a 30- or

60-minute shift to help with registration, games, serving drinks, or ice cream. Please contact Parks and Recreation Supervisor Sarah Gualtieri at 650-947-2518 for more information or to volunteer.

The Town Picnic is limited to Los Altos Hills residents only. There is no fee; however, advance registration is required. More information will be mailed to every resident in May.



COMETS

VISITORS
FROM
DEEP SPACE

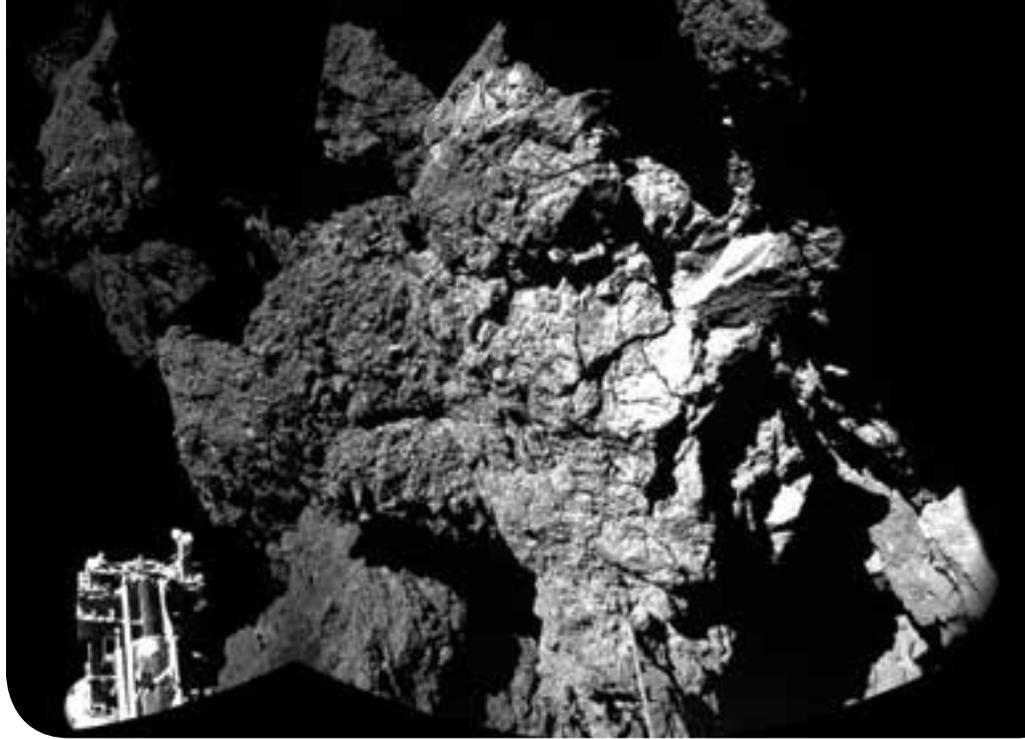
A vibrant image of a comet streaking across a dark, star-filled sky. The comet's nucleus is a bright, glowing greenish-white sphere on the right, with a long, ethereal blue and white tail trailing towards the left. The background is a dense field of distant stars.

Until this past fall, humanity's robot representatives had only landed on six worlds: the Moon, Mars, Venus, Saturn's moon Titan, and two asteroids. None of those landings were quite as difficult and strange as the one by the small Philae spacecraft on a comet on November 12 of last year. Comet C-G (Churyumov-Gerasimenko, named after its discoverers) currently orbits the Sun every 6.5 years and is going to swing around the Sun in August 2015. As the world held its breath, the little craft landed successfully on C-G, but then bounced awkwardly into the shadows, where its solar panels could not receive the power they needed.

Still, before it went quiet, Philae sent us the first ever pictures from the surface of a comet, one of the most remarkable achievements of the space age. Comets are small chunks of ancient “dirty ice” (ice with bits of dust frozen within them.) Philae’s mother ship, the Rosetta spacecraft, continues to orbit Comet C-G, and is going to be moving inward with the comet toward the Sun, another first for the record books.

It took Rosetta about 10 years and a journey of 4 billion miles to get out to Comet C-G. We reached it when it was still about half way between the orbit of Jupiter and the orbit of Mars. At that distance the comet is not very active and so it is easier to photograph and to land on. Like many smaller pieces in the solar system, the comet is not round but has an irregular shape; I think it looks a bit like a dog’s chew toy. Astronomers speculate that this odd-shaped little world (about 2 ½ miles wide) is actually two smaller comets that may have stuck together long ago.

For much of human history, comets were considered to be omens of disaster. Unlike the regular “clockwork” motion of the Moon, the Sun, and the planets, comets just seemed to come out of nowhere, and disturb our well-ordered skies. As ice in a comet got closer and closer to the Sun, it started to evaporate and produce an eerie glowing cloud



Opposite page: Comet Lovejoy 2014 develops the characteristic cloud and tail of evaporated material in this March 2015 image by Gerald Rhemann (Photo copyright G. Rhemann, used with permission). Above: Humanity’s first image from the surface of a comet. This picture shows the view looking out from the Philae lander, one of whose “feet” is visible in the lower left. (ESA photo)

and a “tail.” Today, however, we know a lot more about these celestial visitors – and may, in fact, have much to thank them for.

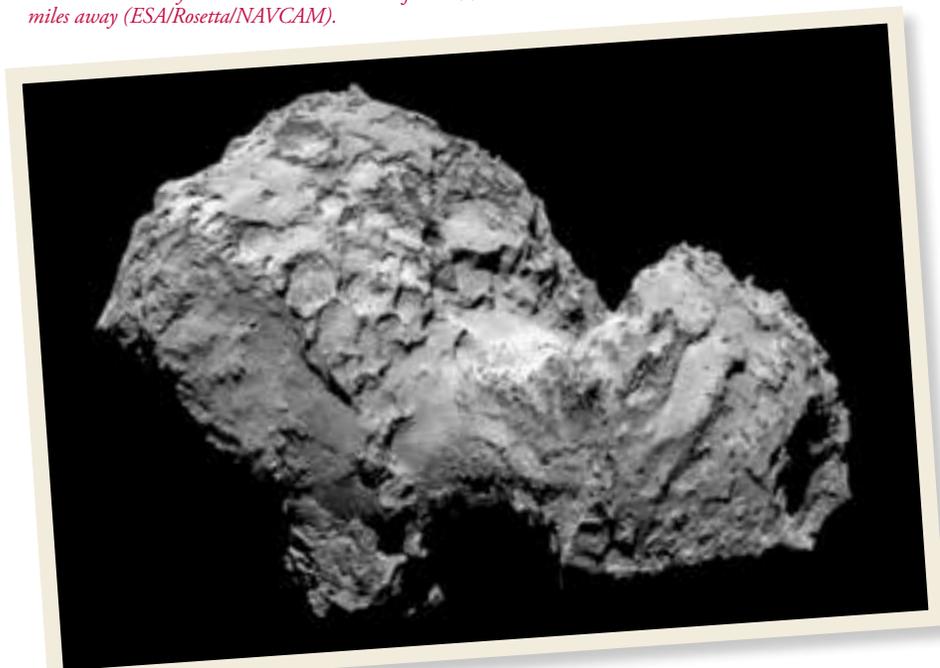
When the solar system (the Sun and its family) first gathered together, some 5 billion years ago, good janitorial services were not available. So a lot of the “garbage” from this early period simply got left behind among the larger worlds that formed. We call the rocky left-overs asteroids, and the icy chunks from this early time comets. Many such chunks – of varying sizes – circulated throughout the solar system. A good

number of them hit the larger worlds that had formed, making craters like the ones we see on the Moon.

On Earth, the craters from older impacts are erased by water, wind, vegetation, earthquakes, teenage drivers, and other destructive forces. But we think many rocky and icy chunks must have hit the Earth over its 4.6 billion year history. If a lot of comets hit the Earth early on, that may explain a mystery scientists have grappled with for years.

Our planet has a lot of water on its surface and in its polar caps. Yet the early Earth, when it was first forming, must have been very hot. It is likely that the heat would have evaporated some of our original water and driven it into space. So it’s a bit hard to explain the abundance of water that our planet possesses. But if comets collided with a cooler Earth later on, they could have delivered a great deal of fresh water to us. If this turns out to be right, then it may be that some part of every bottle of water you drink today might be “comet juice”—water a comet brought to Earth billions of years ago.

Comet C-G seen by the camera on the Rosetta from 177 miles away (ESA/Rosetta/NAVCAM).



Andrew Fraknoi is the Chair of the Astronomy Department at Foothill College. He teaches evening classes on astronomy and “physics for poets” to which Los Altos residents are invited. See: www.foothill.edu/ast



Rescue Me



Residents can sleep peacefully knowing that the Los Altos Hills County Fire District (LAHCFD) is ready to respond to any emergency call. The mission of the LAHCFD is to protect the lives, property, and environment within the district from fires, disasters, and medical emergencies or incidents — through education, prevention, and emergency response services. The LAHCFD contracts with the accredited Santa Clara County Fire Department (SCCFD) to fulfill its mission. By partnering with the SCCFD for the delivery of emergency response services, residents enjoy all of the benefits offered by a large organization, including a full roster of professional staff, specialized equipment, and a high level of readiness for a wide range of emergencies.

In operation since 1939, the fire district encompasses the Town of Los Altos Hills and some adjacent county areas. Based at the fire station located at Foothill College, 24/7 coverage is provided by three shifts, each of at least one company of four firefighters and a Battalion Chief. Every firefighter is trained to at least Emergency Medical Technician level (EMT) and at least one on each shift is a fully qualified paramedic.

The fire district is funded by a portion of residents' property taxes. The district's annual budget of approximately \$9 million is administered by seven commissioners appointed by the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors. The commissioners hold one meeting each month to review the district's budgets, policies, personnel, services, and level of performance.

In addition to emergency response services, the district offers a number of programs that are well known to residents. These include the weed abatement, monthly yard debris drop-off, and tree programs. Since its inception in July 2011, the tree service program has removed 3,104 dead trees and 1,614 Eucalyptus

trees. Additionally, the community brush and yard trimmings collection program is held monthly at Foothill College.

Another important program is the disaster-preparedness program that offers Personal Emergency Preparedness (PEP) and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) classes that are free for all residents. Since the programs began in 2007, 1,500 residents have graduated from PEP classes and



251 residents have graduated from CERT classes. Out of those 251 CERT-certified residents, 40 have taken advanced courses to become CERT Supervisors to assist in the event of a natural disaster. The LAHCFD maintains emergency supplies in a trailer called an ARK to be used by the

CERT program in the event of a natural disaster.

The fire district also manages several behind-the-scenes programs critical to the safety of residents and their property. These programs focus on pipeline and water hydrant maintenance (installation, testing, and upgrading), as well as the development and maintenance of water tanks located at strategic points throughout the town.

- FAST FACTS**
- 90% of first-response calls are medical emergencies
 - In 2014, firefighters responded to 611 incidents
 - In 2013, firefighters responded to 584 incidents

UPCOMING EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS CLASSES

PEP WORKSHOP
Feb. 21 & March 14 (9 am to 12:30 pm)

SENIOR PEP WORKSHOP
Feb. 28 & March 21 (9 am to 1:00 pm)

CERT CLASSES (FOUR PART CLASS)
March 31 (6 - 9:30 pm), April 4 (9 am - 3 pm);
April 7 (6 - 9:30 pm); April 11 (9 am - 3 pm).
All classes held at Town Hall.

To register for classes or learn more, visit lahcfd.org or contact Mike Sanders at 922-1055 or mike.sanders@cnt.sccgov.org.



Left: Rosalie flanked by her many grateful students. Above: Rosalie with Murphy, a West Highland White Terrier owned by Jack Caffey.

Dog Whisperer Retires

After 50 years of training dogs and their owners (12 of those years with the Parks and Recreation Department), Rosalie Alvarez, who recently turned 89, retired at the end of 2014. This extraordinary teacher was honored at a party held in December at the Hillview Community Center and awarded a proclamation at Town Hall.

Alvarez began working with animals when she was five years old. At the family ranch in Ukiah, she began training dogs, cats, cows, horses, chickens, ducks, and geese. After years of training dogs and traveling with a drill team of Dobermans, Alvarez settled in Los Altos Hills in 1960. She began offering dog obedience classes at her home. The classes were very popular — on any given weekend, up to 100 dogs and their owners attended.

In preparation for her retirement,

Alvarez has been working with her successor, Lindy McLaren. “I started mentoring her several years ago,” explains Alvarez, “and we have worked together on and off through the years. She has a similar attitude about training. I would never want to hand over my classes to anyone else. Lindy has great training ethics, and truly loves dogs.”

Alvarez leaves a legacy of thousands of well-trained dogs and very grateful owners spanning half a century — a remarkable achievement. Jack Caffey, a long-time student, remarks “Rosalie is a magical dog trainer. Over the years we have trained six dogs with her. Her magic is reading the people and their dogs. She knows just what to say and when to say it, even though advanced dogs are mixed in with beginner dogs. Her training sessions always include stories about past

students and their troubles, and they always underline her lessons in an entertaining way.”

Another student, who suffers from bipolar disorder, praises Alvarez: “Rosalie says she trains dogs to save their lives — but she saved my life. She helped train my dog to wake me up every day at the same time and nudge me until I take my medication. My dog encourages me to leave my home and enjoy the outdoors.”

Resident Linda Kirk and her pet, Red, began taking classes in 2009. She says “I knew nothing about training a dog, and Rosalie opened a whole new world for me. Not only did I make new friends and become a member of the Deep Peninsula Dog Training Club, but Rosalie’s patience and knowledge helped me develop important life-saving skills in Red.”

Caring for Your Home



After several months of cold weather, residents look forward to the warmth of spring. Houses, like people, also need to make the transition from winter to spring. Here are a number of tips to help keep your home functioning properly and efficiently.

Let’s start with the inside of your home. It is important to look at your furnace filter. If it has been running all winter there is likely to be dust buildup. If the filter is clogged it will require replacement or cleaning.

One of the most common problems, that left uncorrected creates bigger problems, is moisture in the bathrooms. Check the caulking around the shower enclosure and tub. Look for moisture around the base of the toilet. If there is more than average condensation, the wax ring may have failed. If the wax ring is not replaced, the gray water will seep into the floors, causing wood rot, which is expensive to repair.

The spring is also a good time to check that all of the smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in your home are working properly. It is always a good idea to test all of them. Check the expiration date (most have a life expectancy of five to seven years) to see if the alarm requires replacement.

Turning our attention to the exterior of the house, walk the entire perimeter of your home to check for the following conditions. First, look

for excess vegetation close to your home. All trees and shrubs should be trimmed away from the house, retaining a nice shape. Remove any debris from the areas around your home. Cleaning debris helps prevent disease from old vegetation and tree clippings that contribute to the break down of healthy soil for plants. Another reason to remove old debris and vegetation is that it can attract unwanted pests. Also look for small holes and entryways where small rodents can get in.

In addition, keep any rain water away from your homes foundation by checking all the down spouts. Make sure all the down spouts are directed away from your home and foundation. Sometimes this goes unnoticed and all the moisture can cause erosion under the foundation. Speaking of water, take a look at your irrigation system. Homeowners tend to forget about the irrigation lines during winter. Look for and fix any leaks; make sure you are watering efficiently and accurately.

Now, let’s walk into the garden. Spring is the best time to prune perennial flowers and plants like lavender. This is also the perfect time to cut back roses and fruit trees along with planting any new ones. Also, spray for any diseases and bugs at this time. The end of February is a perfect time to start fertilizing because the weather and the soil are starting to warm up. It is critical to fertilize acid-loving plants like camellias, azaleas, and rhododendrons. Also, use lawn pre-emergent to prevent weeds in the lawn and yard. Weeds can get out of hand quickly so it is best to stay on top of them to keep your yard healthy and looking great.

Long-time resident Henry Nesmith is a home repair and restoration expert and owner of Los Altos Hardware, Inc.



MEETING THE DOCTOR'S DOCTOR

A pathologist and surgeon consult with each other in the operating room.

Understanding the role of a pathologist

Treating cancer is a complex task. There are many team members involved from the very beginning of any cancer patient's path. Some team members and caregivers are more visible than others. Most remember their medical oncologist, surgeon, and nurses, but very few even know the name of their pathologist, the specialist who helped diagnose their specific type of cancer.

Pathologists are a crucial member of a patient's diagnostic team and play one of the most important roles in diagnosing and staging cancer. A pathologist, often referred to as a

"doctor's doctor," is a physician who deals with the causes and nature of disease, and contributes to diagnosis, prognosis and treatment through knowledge gained by the laboratory application of the biologic, chemical, and physical sciences. The pathology report is a document prepared by a pathologist that contains findings from the specimen, cells, and fluid examination, which is used as a roadmap to help determine a patient's prognosis and treatment strategies.

Before a cancer diagnosis, a pathologist will use their specialized skills and high-tech tools to identify if tumors

are malignant or benign, assign risk factors and diagnosis, and determine where they fall on the cancer spectrum. He or she understands how disease is manifested at the cellular and tissue level and partners with cancer diagnostic and treatment specialists to determine individualized care plans based on molecular findings. From the report, the multidisciplinary team of the Tumor Board will develop a personalized treatment strategy.

Utilizing this expertise, El Camino Hospital has five year-cancer survival rates that exceed most other cancer programs. With these successful cancer survival rates, the El Camino Hospital Cancer Center is expanding to offer enhanced services to better meet the needs of our community. The new Cancer Center will be unveiled on March 16, 2015. To learn more, visit www.elcaminohospital.org/cancer

The Santa Clara Valley Watercolor Society will be exhibiting work at Los Altos Hills Town Hall from March 7 until August 28. The Society, established more than 60 years ago, provides workshops with eminent instructors from around the country, a weekly plein aire (outdoor painting) group, and opportunities to exhibit, as well as a variety of social activities for its 400 members. The juried exhibit is titled “No Limits — Freedom to Create.” In this extraordinary exhibit, all the usual rules for exhibits are to be broken in a challenge to creativity. Work in

FREEDOM *to* CREATE

watercolor, collage, mixed media, gouache, and any water-based medium will be accepted for exhibit. Artists can use the paint surface of their choice, including paper, canvas, cardboard, or wood. There is no size limit or framing requirement. Because the exhibit space has large, tall walls, artists are encouraged to create large pieces. Many of the participating artists show their work in area galleries and many teach art locally. Linda Covello, Art School Director of the Community School of Music and Art will be the juror for this juried exhibit. The free art exhibit is open to the public. A



reception for artists will be at Town Hall on Sunday, April 19, from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Gourmet food and wine will be served and Park Avenue Jazz will provide live music. The event is child and dog friendly. Children and adults are also invited to participate in a free sculpture-making workshop held at the reception. For more information, contact curator Karen Druker at 650-941-8073.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED IN LOS ALTOS HILLS



How can a resident play an active role in determining the future of Los Altos Hills? Simple — join a committee. For more than five decades, the Town of Los Altos Hills has depended on its citizens to volunteer for important roles in local government. There are many opportunities to contribute to its direction and vision and to make the town the best it can be for all of us who call it home. Over 100 residents are members of the town’s advisory committees. Residents can make a difference by volunteering to become a member of one of these committees, where they can meet neighbors and fellow residents to support the town with their participation and experience.

Residents are invited to apply for any of the town’s committees. The following committees currently have openings:

- Community Relations (3 vacancies)
- Education (5 vacancies)
- Emergency Communications (15 vacancies)
- Environmental Design and Protection (1 vacancy)
- Environmental Initiatives (4 vacancies)
- History (1 vacancy)
- LA - LAH Senior Commission (1 vacancy)
- LA - LAH Joint Community Volunteer Service Awards (3 vacancies)
- LA - LAH Library Commission (1 vacancy)
- Parks and Recreation (3 vacancies)
- Senior Commission (1 vacancy)
- Traffic Safety (2 vacancies)
- Youth Commission (2 vacancies)



Information on the charges and duties of the committees and applications can be obtained at Town Hall, from the town website: www.losaltoshills.ca.gov/ under “City Government Standing Committees,” or by phone (650) 941-7222.



TOWN OF LOS ALTOS HILLS
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 Los Altos Hills, CA 94022

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Town Newsletter Statement of Purpose

This is the official town newsletter to communicate current issues, services, and activities in Los Altos Hills to the residents of the town — to facilitate, encourage, and improve interaction between the residents and the town government. The newsletter is published quarterly. **Deadline for the next issue is April 1, 2015.**

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www.losaltoshills.ca.gov

Our Town

Our Town is published with assistance from the City Clerk, Deborah Padovan, and Town Volunteer Committees.

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Los Altos Hills City Council

Courtenay Corrigan, Mayor
 John Harpootlian, Mayor Pro Tem
 Rich Larsen
 John Radford
 Gary Waldeck

City Manager

Carl Cahill

CALENDAR



March 12

**Thursday, 7:00-9:00 pm
 Innovations in Water Conservation**

Town Hall. Presenters will discuss water-saving innovations for homes and businesses, such as the new Advanced Water Purification Center, smart irrigation controllers, time-of-use water meters, and home water usage reports. To attend, contact Kit Gordon, kitgordon@me.com.

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**Sunday, 10:00-Noon
 Leadership Conference**

Open to high school and middle school students hosted by the LAH Youth Commission at Hidden Villa's Dana Center. Register by email lahyouthcommission@gmail.com.

April 4

**Sat., 9:00-10:30 am
 12th Annual Hoppin' Hounds Easter Biscuit Hunt**

Bring your four-legged friend to Byrne Preserve for an on-leash biscuit hunt benefiting Palo Alto Animal Services. A \$5 donation is encouraged. For more information call 650-947-2518.

**Sat., 11:00 am-1:00 pm
 Easter Egg Hunt**

Get your Easter basket ready for a friendly hunt at Purissima Park. This is a perfect opportunity to socialize with your neighbors. Bring a picnic lunch and your own hard-boiled eggs. For more information visit www.losaltoshills.ca.gov.



information contact 650-947-2518 or sgualtieri@losaltoshills.ca.gov.

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**Sunday, 2:00-5:00 pm
 Art Reception**

Town Hall. See article on page 11 for more information.

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**Sunday, 1:00-4:00 pm
 Earth Day Celebration**

Farmers market, green vendors, electric vehicle car show, wild cat and reptile presentations, and much more. Due to cat presentations, no dogs allowed. For more

May 9

**Saturday, 9:00 am
 14th Annual Pathways Run/Walk**

5K, 10K, and 1 Mile fun run. For more information visit the event website at www.lahpathwaysrun.org.

Calendar events are also posted on Town's website: www.losaltoshills.ca.gov

