



Quercus agrifolia

Coast Live Oak

Sun

Monthly deep watering in summer only

The Live Oak is one of the fastest growing California native oaks. It can reach 70 feet high and wide over a lifetime of centuries. Its curving branches and domed canopy make it one of our most revered evergreen trees. Many people think Oaks are slow growing but not this one. With good care, five years will produce a tree fifteen feet tall with the curving branches.

In the garden, Oaks have a few disadvantages. The leaf, flower and acorn drop can be a nuisance if the canopy is over paving or a pool. Some staining on paving may occur. The holly like leaves are prickly so walking barefoot is a challenge. Oaks require infrequent watering so plants under the canopy need to be compatible with dry shade. Finally, they get quite large so the site needs to be accommodating. All said, Oaks with a scattering of boulders and dry shade plants create a peaceful and welcoming setting.

A light pruning every three to five years will help keep the canopy more open and free of dead wood. Prune during the dormant season in mid to later summer. This will avoid stimulating new growth that can mildew during the cooler months.

Oaks and their acorns provide sustenance and shelter for a complex network of insects, birds, and other wildlife. Seldom are any of these a problem for the tree. Occasionally the Oak Moth Caterpillar can be a serious problem and require spraying by a professional service. One measure of Oak tree health is the size and shape of the leaves. Larger flatter leaves indicate strong health. Smaller cupped leaves indicate stress.