



**LA Native Plants**  
a coalition for biodiversity in the Los Angeles urban forest  
*LANativePlants on Facebook*



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RE: Rose Avenue Streetscape Improvements

Andreas:

Thanks for taking time to show me around the Rose Avenue project grounds this week. I greatly appreciate that you and other community advocates are doing what you can to make this project all it can be both for the community and ecosystem health.

The project document from Streets LA and CD11 that you shared is, as we discussed, a bit vague on details and lacks precise measurements, but it does indicate that 24 new trees will be added as a result of the improvements. Based on the specification that the walkway will be 5ft wide, 23 of the 24 trees are slated to be planted in approximately 4ft-wide parkways while the 24th tree appears to be targeted for a parkway that is approximately 8ft-wide.

The four trees listed in the plan palette are small in stature due to the size constraints of the project. Three of the trees are not native species (**Sweet Bay / *Laurus nobilis*** is incorrectly listed as native). While the fourth species, **Desert Willow / *Chilopsis linearis***, is native to the California Floristic Province, this tree is not native to LA County and can struggle in coastal applications as you and I witnessed at a nearby project.

To best support our ecosystem and pollinators during our biodiversity crisis, I instead recommend the following locally native species that fit the project's size requirements:

**California Buckeye / *Aesculus californica***  
**Blueblossom Ceanothus / *Ceanothus thyrsiflorus* 'Blueblossom'**  
**Summer Holly / *Comarostaphylis diversifolia***  
**California Ash / *Fraxinus dipetala***  
**Laurel Sumac / *Malosma laurina***  
**California Wax Myrtle / *Morella californica***  
**Catalina Cherry / *Prunus ilicifolia* ssp. *lyonii***  
**Goodding's Black Willow / *Salix gooddingii***

There may be pushback on these species, which is why I am providing more options to replace the four in the current project in case some are rejected. Some of these species will want to multi-trunk, which is also true of the non-native trees currently in the project design. Streets LA will require that the species are "standardized" (pruned to a single trunk). That's certainly possible with all of these if trained at the nursery and with aggressive maintenance pruning during the establishment years. Some will suggest Goodding's Black Willow is only riparian, but once established it can be very drought tolerant and is better adapted to coastal conditions than Desert Willow.

For the 24th tree in this project in a larger planting location, there is an opportunity for a larger native species that produces more canopy. However, because this location is surrounded by irrigated grass lawn, I'd avoid our native oaks and go with one of these choices.

**Western Sycamore / *Platanus racemosa***  
**California Bay Laurel / *Umbellularia californica***  
**White Alder / *Alnus rhombifolia***

If you are unsuccessful advocating for native species, I encourage you to at the very least strongly object to the inclusion of invasive **Chinese Flame Tree / *Koelreuteria bipinnata*** in the project. This robust species creates a lot of problems in Los Angeles, and the proximity of the project to storm drains that lead to the local watershed means planting this species here will result in more invasive spread of this species in regional habitat.

With respect to landscaping plants, several native plants are included. I have some notes as follows:

**Bee's Bliss Sage / *Salvia leucophylla* 'Bee's Bliss'**  
**Common Yarrow / *Achillea millefolium***  
**Deergrass / *Muhlenbergia rigens***

**Hummingbird Sage / *Salvia spathacea***

Great plant, but be aware that the dormancy season is fairly long. Deadheading produces a longer bloom season even though I would not recommend that for wild habitat areas.

**Margarita Foothill Penstemon / *Penstemon heterophyllus* 'Margarita BOP'**

Lovely flowers, but in my experience this plant rarely lives more than five years, so replacements should be in the maintenance plan.

**Firecracker Penstemon / *Penstemon eatonii***

We were not able to test the soil during our visit. This plant will struggle if the soil is heavy clay.

**Manzanita / *Arctostaphylos***

**California Lilac / *Ceanothus***

Both of these plants are listed by genus without naming the specific species. Both genera have many species, subspecies, and cultivars. There are great options and bad options within both genera. Your group should press for clarity so the project crews are not green-lit to simply select whatever species happens to be available on a given day at the project source nursery. Though there are several good options, a couple of good candidates would be the species below.

**Little Sur Manzanita / *Arctostaphylos edmundsii***

**Maritime Ceanothus / *Ceanothus maritimus***

Additionally there are eight non-native landscaping plant species listed in the project. I would push to have these replaced with native species. Good options for this project that would serve the same purposes while better supporting the ecosystem include:

**Coyote Brush / *Baccharis pilularis*** — Twin Peaks and Pigeon Point cultivar will fit this space

**California Sagebrush / *Artemisia californica*** — Montara cultivar or similar

**Palmer's Mallow / *Abutilon palmeri***

**Apricot Mallow / *Sphaeralcea ambigua***

**Sticky Monkeyflower / *Mimulus aurantiacus***

**Red Monkeyflower / *Mimulus aurantiacus* ssp. *puniceus***

**Seaside Daisy / *Erigeron glaucus*** — W.R. cultivar or similar

**Seaside Heliotrope / *Heliotropium curassavicum***

**California Fuchsia / *Epilobium canum***

**Black Sage / *Salvia mellifera*** — Terra Seca cultivar if smallest form is preferred

I also recommend these two species for their exceptional biodiversity support even though they have long dormancy periods.

**Narrow Leaf Milkweed / *Asclepias fascicularis***

**California Buckwheat / *Eriogonum fasciculatum***

I hope this proves helpful to your efforts. If I can be of further assistance to the project, please let me know.

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