



Friends of Sausal Creek

Promoting Watershed Protection

Biodiversity Fact Sheet

The Friends of Sausal Creek seeks to increase the biodiversity of plants and animals in our watershed.

Biodiversity:

Bio (Life)- Diversity (Variations in Number and Types).

Ecosystems:

Eco (Home)- System (a combination of interlocking parts). There are six major ecosystems, or habitat types, in the Sausal Creek watershed: Riparian, Oak Woodland, Coastal Scrub, Perennial Grassland, Redwood, and Chaparral. Each of these ecosystems is naturally home to a diversity of native plants and animals.

What is a *native* plant?

Native plants are the ones belonging to a specific habitat type. Some **non-natives**, which come from other places and are particularly aggressive, are considered to be **INVASIVE**. Invasive plants make room only for themselves and outcompete the native plant communities in a given ecosystem. The result of plant invasions tends to be reduced biodiversity within a given ecosystem.

Where do invasive plants come from?

Invasive plants often escape from peoples' gardens. This is the case with vinca, spiderwort, Algerian ivy, and Himalayan blackberry. Some of these plants originated on other continents and were brought here by the horticultural (commercial nursery) trade. Others came to the U.S. in ship ballasts or as seeds on the boots of people returning from hikes/ safaris in different areas. Because invasive plants then grow in places where their natural predators are absent, they easily grow out of control.

What are the qualities of invasive plants?

Invasive plants often produce high seed sets and reproduce vegetatively as well as sexually. Vegetative reproduction is generally in the form of rhizomes (underground stems) or stolons (above-ground stems) that spread and root at the nodes. Virtually all of the invasive plants you will be removing today have this in common: acacia, elm, spiderwort, Cape ivy, Algerian ivy, Himalayan and thornless blackberry. For that reason, it will be important to remove the below ground runners, and in some cases to dig out all of the roots.

Why go “native” and plant native plants?

Because we seek to restore biodiversity, we remove invasive species and replace them with the native plants that naturally grow in each habitat type. In doing so, we recreate a diversity of habitats and food sources for birds and other wildlife in the watershed. All of the native plants we put in the ground at the restoration sites are grown at our own native plant nursery from seeds and cuttings of native populations in the watershed.

The Restoration Cycle:

Spring: Seed collection of native plant populations. Invasive plant removal.

Summer: Growing plants at the nursery and continuing with invasive plant removal at restoration sites.

Fall: Transplanting plants into big pots at the nursery and installing erosion control at restoration sites. Preparation for planting.

Winter: The rains come. Plants at the nursery which are mature are set out in the sun to become resistant to winds and temperature fluctuations. Mature plants are planted out at restoration sites, according to habitat type. Cuttings are collected from shrubs in the watershed for planting for the following year.