

Forest Facts

The Importance of Native Trees

by Howard Skidmore, board member of Friends of Carmel Forest

The tall, stately Monterey pine and the wind-shaped Monterey cypress dominate the spectacular scenery of the local coastline. Their presence helps make the area an attractive place to live and draws thousands of visitors yearly from around the world.

The Monterey cypress occurs naturally in only two small stands, at Point Lobos and the Del Monte Forest. The Monterey pine is native only to the Monterey Peninsula and to four other small areas along the Pacific coast, the closest at Point Año Nuevo and Cambria.

The threat of serious loss or even extinction of these two trees arises from the introduction into the area of non-native trees that do not have the same genetic makeup. For instance, Monterey pine seeds were used years ago in Australia and New Zealand to selectively breed a tree for commercial lumber and nursery stock. The planting of trees from this source adjacent to the native stands threatens, through cross-pollination, the genetic makeup of the native trees.

Because the native trees have a genetic heritage specifically shaped by Monterey Peninsula conditions, they might be more resistant to storms, fire, diseases, insect infestations, drought and other local environmental pressures. Non-native trees planted locally may be less adapted, in the long run, to local conditions.

Friends of Carmel Forest
An officially-designated City Support Group
Post Office Box 344, Carmel-by-the-Sea, CA 93921
(831) 624-3208