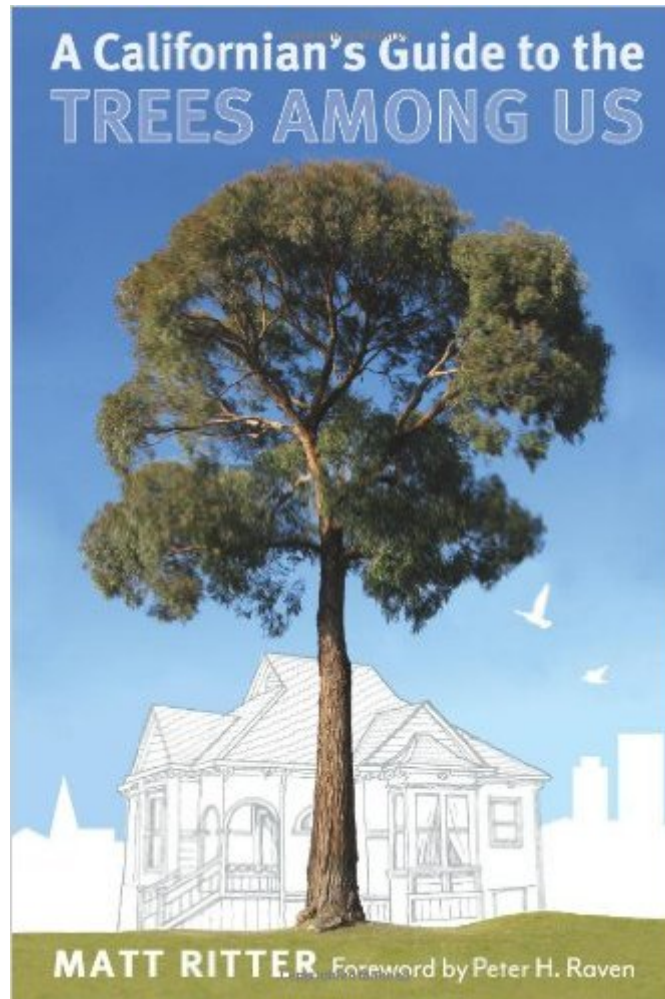


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# Californian's Guide To The Trees Among Us, A



## Synopsis

We bring the strength and beauty of the natural world into our urban landscapes by planting trees, and California is blessed with a rich horticultural history, visible in an abundance of cultivated trees that enrich our lives with extraordinary color, bizarre shapes, unusual textures, and unexpected aromas. *A Californian's Guide to the Trees among Us* features over 150 of California's most commonly grown trees. Whether native or cultivated, these are the trees that muffle noise, create wildlife habitats, mitigate pollution, conserve energy, and make urban living healthier and more peaceful. Used as a field guide or read with pleasure for the liveliness of the prose, this book will allow readers to learn the stories behind the trees that shade our parks, grace our yards, and line our streets. Rich in photographs and illustrations, overflowing with anecdote and information, *A Californian's Guide to the Trees among Us* opens our eyes to a world of beauty just outside our front doors.

## Book Information

Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: Heyday; 3/16/11 edition (April 1, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 159714147X

ISBN-13: 978-1597141475

Product Dimensions: 6.5 x 0.5 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (34 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #89,119 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #59 in [Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Plants > Trees](#) #130 in [Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Reference](#) #2978 in [Books > Sports & Outdoors](#)

## Customer Reviews

In the three weeks that I've owned this book, I've been able to identify dozens of trees in my neighborhood -- brush cherry and holly oak in my complex, Brisbane box in the supermarket parking lot, Bradley pear at the post office. Although by no means comprehensive, *A Californian's Guide to the Trees Among Us* is a huge improvement over my previous tree identification strategy (scrolling through pages of image search results for 'tree with bright pink berries'). Assuming you live in California and have an interest in trees, this is a great starter field guide that not only profiles lots of common street trees (over 150 of them), but also provides the basics on how to look at trees and

talk about them. There's an non-illustrated identification key in the beginning, but the book (divided into gymnosperms, angiosperms, and palms) is mostly composed of full color tree profiles, arranged by Latin name. (If you're new to trees, you may end up flipping around a lot at first.) Each profile contains full color photographs of the tree and its most distinctive features -- e.g. the leaves, bark, flowers, or seeds. Unlike most field guides, Ritter's text offers plenty of interesting, eclectic factoids about each tree. If you're a nerd, you might find *Trees Among Us* to be a fun read in its own right. I definitely did. Check out the profile on dogwood for Ritter's most droll entry. A few usability quibbles: in focusing on just the most distinctive features of each tree, Ritter doesn't always include a close-up of the leaves, which can be annoying especially if the features he does include (like flowers or fruit) don't happen to be on the tree at the moment.

As my headline states: this book was underwhelming but useful. I volunteer for an environmental organization that plants trees all over Los Angeles in urban, suburban, and wild land. As such, I often get questions about what kinds of trees grow here. When the author did a workshop at a local community festival I thought this would be a great resource to help me make sure I'm giving the most accurate information possible. While this book is quite useful in identifying different species of trees (high marks for that), if you want more in-depth information on particular species this is not the resource for you. It is merely a field guide first and foremost for identification. If you're looking for ideas on what to plant in your yard I would not recommend this book. The author does not keep his writing unbiased and even goes so far as to praise eucalyptus which have proven to be one of the most destructive invasive species in California. To the unknowing reader, trees such as eucalyptus and ficus are presented, by this book, as aesthetically pleasing and gems of the urban forest, but there is little focus on the hazardous nature of these plants and why they shouldn't be planted here in the first place (uplifting sidewalks, digging into water mains, fire hazard, disease prone, weedy, etc). It would have been nice to have alternatives mentioned and not just to counter the invasive exotics but also new species of trees that aren't widely cultivated in CA but could be useful here without being invasive. For example, what species could we introduce that are more fire, drought, and flood resistant, have beautiful rare foliage, or would grow better in the elements of the city landscape (confinement, heat, pollution)?

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