

# TREETISE

FALL 2010

## Eucalyptus and You

ROOTED IN KNOWLEDGE

VOLUME 2 | ISSUE 4

In Southern California, San Diego County in particular, one of the most popular trees we work with and hear people talk about is the Eucalyptus. Feelings about the Eucalyptus seem to range anywhere from frustration and fear to appreciation and a desire for their preservation.

As tree care professionals, we're often called in to assess these trees and are equipped to determine if a specimen is safe, and worth keeping, or if it needs to be removed because it's a danger. Either way, it seems all too often people form their opinions based on inaccurate information. Many people even view the Eucalyptus, as a species, as a gigantic weed they wish we could be rid of.

Our goal in this TREETISE is to provide useful information about the Eucalyptus so you can make educated decisions about how to deal with this widely diverse and interesting genus. But before we get into the nitty-gritty, we'd first like to explain how this tree ended up in San Diego.

### Eucalyptus in San Diego

As many San Diegans know, Eucalyptus trees were used as material for railroad ties in the Santa Fe Railway. What most people don't know, however, is that the Eucalyptus was introduced to San Diego in 1880 as a fuel crop (ranchers planted them in the Poway and Cajon valleys for this purpose) long before the idea of using their timber for railroad ties was suggested.

The trees (for example, the blue leaf mallee seen above) also came to be used for their oils and menthol specifically, which had medicinal uses in the prevention of malaria and the treatment of many other ailments, including: fevers, bladder infections and congestion (which we still use the tree's oils for today).



It wasn't until 1906 that Eucalyptuses were produced for railway timber. For this purpose, over three million seedlings were successfully planted in the area now known as Rancho Santa Fe. As with all history, our present experiences are products of the decisions of those before us so it's now our task to work with both the negative and positive consequences of those plantings.

n. (tree•tis) a formal and systematic exposition of the



### Message from the President

We at Four Seasons Tree Care wish each of you a wonderful Thanksgiving! As we gather with friends and family, we reflect on where we've been, where we're going and who has been there with us along the way. We are very thankful for our relationship with you and the opportunity we've had to work with so many amazing companies here in Southern California.



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## A Great Variety

There are over 700 species of Eucalyptus (all members of the Myrtaceae family), which makes it one of the most diverse genres of trees on earth. Although many of these species can't be seen unless you visit Australia, a respectable variety can be found in Southern California.

In San Diego, there are at least 12 species of Eucalyptus that we work with on a regular basis (*camaldulensis*, *citriodora*, *cladocalyx*, *ficifolia*, *globulus*, *lehmannii*, *maculata*, *nicholii*, *polyanthemos*, *rudis*, *sideroxy-lon* and *viminalis* – though *citriodora*, *ficifolia* and *maculata* were recently reclassified to the new genus, *Corymbia*). And then there are the less common, but uniquely beautiful Eucalyptuses we come across every so often: *cinerea*, *delgupta* (shown above) and *gunnii*.



## Proper Care and Potential Problems

As mentioned earlier, one of the most common emotions we encounter regarding the Eucalyptus is fear. People think the trees are too big, have shallow root systems, or just plain old look dangerous. As arborists, though, it's our job to allay these fears; under the right set of circumstances, these trees can be great, but it's important to keep up on their condition.

While many people have heard stories about these trees falling over or losing their branches, these types of problems can most often be predicted and possibly prevented through regular site observations by qualified arborists...and we stress the word qualified.

Some species of Eucalyptus are very brittle, such as the *polyanthemos* and the *sideroxy-lon*. Others are known to be self-pruning, which means they shed large limbs (*cladocalyx* and *camaldulensis*). But then there are the less hazardous varieties that can be an incredible addition to an urban

landscape (*ficifolia* and *nicholii*). The *ficifolia* flower is shown above. Knowing which species of Eucalyptus you have on your property will help you make proper decisions regarding the care or removal of those trees.

Regarding the common concern that Eucalyptuses have shallow roots, well, that's true (as do all trees), but they also have sinker roots that penetrate vertically to provide support.



With fire and storm season upon us, we encourage you to be proactive in making sure your properties are as safe as possible. Timing can be everything, which is clearly illustrated by this letter of gratitude we received for tree services performed at St. Clare's Home. Little did we know that giving of our time and resources would save their property from the destruction of the 2007 fires:

"Thank you so much for your time and resources; they were miracles... Your timing was a Godsend..."

n. (tree• tis) a formal and systematic exposition of the principles of a subject; more detailed than an essay.



Trouble is, most urban soils have been compacted from construction, thus making it hard for vertical roots to develop. Also, in San Diego, many areas boast a heavy clay-loam soil, which tends to be difficult for roots to penetrate. That said, if you consider the idea that some Eucalyptuses are still growing strong from the original plantings (nearly a century ago) then the idea that the entire genus has shallow root problems certainly becomes challenged.



Eucalyptuses are so diverse that we could literally cover them in nearly every TREETISE and still hardly scratch the surface. So if you'd like to learn more, please send an email to [info@FourSeasonsTC.com](mailto:info@FourSeasonsTC.com) and we will send you links to additional information. If you have a particular concern at your property, please make sure to get as much information as possible so that the decisions you make will be educated. The Eucalyptus can be dangerous, but it can also be a proper and safe member of your landscape when cared for correctly.

Friday's clean-up before the fires defused the palms, which were like matchsticks in an area that was evacuated. I believe you saved the Encanto property... As the facilities manager I know you saved us from untold structural damage to roofs and eaves, as well as from the horrible fire.

What a blessing to save the trees, roofs, and again the property that was a mass of fuel ready to be ignited by palms with several feet of dry dead fronds. Thank you for your generous contribution and outstanding performance."

God Bless,  
Mary Ferro  
St. Clare's Home

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OF TREETISE**

**A Pine Opine**