

The astounding longevity and surprising benefits of native plants of California and the entire Southwest inspire The SummerTree Institute's newest educational program...

SAVING THE ANCIENTS

Our desert shrubs and trees, though not the size of towering redwoods, are at least as old, or older than some of our more revered giants.

A Project Announcement by

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a non profit endeavor

“You mean that scrubby bush over there is over 200 years old?”

“Wow, I had no idea!” the bulldozer operator said incredulously, looking down from his tractor at the upturned roots of the desert wild plum in the freshly graded lot.

I walked over to the twisted, broken trunk, where a fracture exposed literally hundreds of dark and light growth rings. I quickly counted a portion of the thin bands which preserved the story of many a spring’s vibrant growth, then summer’s slowing pace before winter’s sleep. “This shrub could easily be three hundred years old, Mike, probably already mature when America was born. I would love to have a cross-cut of the trunk to count this tree’s actual age.” Winter and summer woods, tightly packed together even in favorable rainy years, whispered a preserved history of slow but sturdy growth in this extreme desert climate.

“You know, I could have gone around that plant,” Mike said with some remorse, “but the builder said the homeowner wanted the entire lot graded. I would have tried to save it ... if I’d only known.”



Using native desert plants in home landscaping, such as ephedra, California buckwheat, Cleveland sage, desert wild plum and sugarbush shown here, provides homeowners with carefree, earth-friendly garden beauty.

Reactions similar to this have come from developers, homeowners, city council members, teachers, and many others upon hearing the ages of native plants growing in their own backyards.

The SummerTree Institute is accompanying people from various professions, public offices, and backgrounds through parcels with native vegetation as part of the nonprofit’s **SAVING THE ANCIENTS™** project.

I have taken homeowners and builders on walks of properties to be developed and informed them of the ages and assets of the native trees and shrubs on their property. Both homeowners and developers have decided to save as many native plants as possible, with specimens on their sites ranging in age from fifty to one-hundred years old in Mormon tea (ephedra), several hundred years for Mojave yucca and desert wild plum, to over five-hundred years in juniper.

Saving many of these “ancient” native plants required only small design changes like repositioning driveways, or a decision not to clear the parcel’s native vegetation except for the home footprint.

Finding Rewards of Incorporating Native Plants in Landscaping

The reason homeowners and homebuilders alike, after being exposed to SummerTree's **SAVING THE ANCIENTS** philosophy and program, are interested in saving as many of the long-lived native plants as possible on their parcels is for the economic, practical, aesthetic, and environmental benefits. They are realizing that protecting and using long-lived native plants will enhance their landscape, reduce dependence on irrigation, fertilizers, and pesticides, and nurture native wildlife in their backyards, such as the much cherished covies of quail. Homeowners are also excited to learn that they can use the indigenous plants in their yards for their own food, beverages, art, utensils, and safe herbal remedies.

Planning your yard design around native plants can enhance your quality of life on many levels. Native landscapes need much less care, and therefore allow you more time to enjoy your yard.

Birds, from hummingbirds and quail to songbirds, are attracted to native landscapes to feed and nest, helping you keep insect pests under control.

Native landscapes require little or no irrigation when established and need no soil amendments, saving you money. Many native plants also yield edible and useful herbs, fruits, medicinal teas, bouquets, and fragrant potpourris.



Native landscaping can be colorful, diverse, and even lush with only infrequent, once-a-month summer watering.

While SummerTree encourages the protection of ancient native trees and long-lived shrubs to serve as decorative and habitat “anchors” in western landscapes, the Institute also promotes the replanting of natives in areas where vegetation has been previously removed. Native landscaping, which is low maintenance and nearly carefree, adds value, privacy, and beauty to southwest yards, as well as habitat value. SummerTree's **SAVING THE ANCIENTS** philosophy and program aims to enlighten, inspire and empower concerned citizens to turn their frustration into positive and rewarding actions, creating meaningful and lasting results. As the owner of Las Pilitas Nursery in San Luis Obispo stated, **“Plant ten native species in a block and you create your own habitat. Bees and butterflies show up. Get your neighbors involved, and you start a whole wildlife corridor.”**

Tools Create Fun Field and Yard Discoveries for Everyone

The prototype **SAVING THE ANCIENTS** program is being launched in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties of southern California, and targets not only homeowners, but developers, landscape architects, building departments, water districts, chambers of commerce, and city planners. Brochures applicable to each region's native habitat are being developed showing photos of native plants incorporated into local landscapes and gardens. Sources of each area's native plants from local nurseries are listed in the brochures, and the values and uses of each plant are described. SummerTree is also providing on-site field visits to land owners to identify their native plant resources, recommend which plants to preserve for landscape value and habitat enhancement, and determine the ages of older specimens.

SAVING THE ANCIENTS

Our **SAVING THE ANCIENTS** project consists of a rich suite of services and products. This compilation of deliverables is aimed at 3 audiences which we have broadly defined as Adults, Kids/Students and the Teaching Community. The Adult suite of products and services are aimed at homeowners, developers, municipalities, public and community services, and local and regional home and garden outlets and personnel. The Kids/Students line is addressed through schools and teachers as well as educational materials suppliers and distributors. The Teaching Community configuration will include materials and teaching aids and will cover many of the real sciences involved in **SAVING THE ANCIENTS**.

This document outlines and briefly describes the contents of each of the product kits we are also developing for the respective audiences.

PRODUCT KIT CONTENTS

- Three Information and Instruction Brochures:
 - How to Use The "TimeReader"
 - SAVING THE ANCIENTS** Program Brochure
 - The SummerTree Institute Information Brochure
- 15 to 30 "Plant Finder" Cards:
These cards identify plants, and explain the characteristics of "the ancients" in this region. There will be a unique set of cards for each region as the program grows.
- Five "TimeReader" aging templates:
Each of these 5 aging tools will have an appropriate time scale for the expected age of the "ancients" in this region. There will be a unique set of aging templates for each region as the program grows. These will be printed on a very durable heavy-gauge plastic, to withstand the rigors of field use.
- A four-bound pad of 27 Field Log Sheets
On the back of each sheet are instructions for its use and for entering your findings into the SummerTree Institute **SAVING THE ANCIENTS** On-line Database.
- Either a VHS video tape or a DVD video containing:
 - For the "Adult" package - (see video outline)
 - For the "Kids/Students" - (see video outline)
- Included in the Teaching Community kit is a comprehensive Teacher's Guide and Resource Locator. This rich guide will contain lesson plans, project suggestions, field trip recommendations, and a wealth of additional resources to help the Teacher make the most of our program while deeply engaging the students' interest.

PRODUCT KIT PACKAGE

The product packaging contains all of the above program elements within its segmented storage space under a clipboard. It is constructed of durable (field-use ready) plastic and will sit in a portable office while locating and logging the ancients.

Several series of educational kits and field tools are being created by SummerTree for use by homeowners, builders, landscape architects, civic leaders, teachers and students to easily identify and age native plants growing on their own parcels and in natural areas. Among these tools is SummerTree's unique **TIMEREADER**™ plant aging templates.

These tools help anyone to instantly estimate the age of native trees and shrubs in the field, and then relate historic world events to the plant's age on the **TIMEREADER** card. SummerTree's colorful **PLANT FINDER**™ cards help anyone identify the plants on their property with clear photographs and descriptions of plants found in their region.

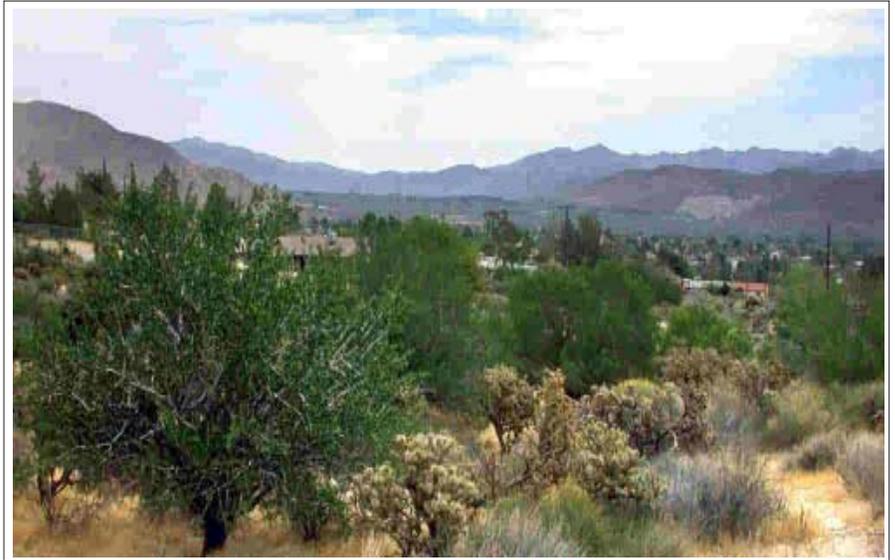
These educational tools, as well as curriculum kits, presentations, documentaries, and regular local television updates and status reports are part of the **SAVING THE ANCIENTS** program.

In a focused effort to share the excitement and fun generated by the program, and because time is of the essence, documentaries, written materials and articles, a lecture series, free-standing information displays for select home and garden stores, and home-video and DVD's are all under rapid development.

All of these learning tools and activities are centered on one concept: the amazing age and usefulness of plants native to each region of the west, and the critical role they play in the quality of life in that region.

Reaching the Right People ... Just in time.

Initial reaction to SummerTree's **SAVING THE ANCIENTS** pilot program has been overwhelmingly positive from developers, homeowners, teachers, and planners. In response to our pilot project, SummerTree has been invited to review and comment on various cities' development codes to adapt regional native plant protection policies for their areas. Reaching these levels of influence is vital to preserving a meaningful mosaic of native vegetation in our fast-developing arid regions of the west. If awareness is not raised in these rapidly developing rural areas, plants that we could lose in the next five years will take many hundreds of years to replace, if ever. Yet, a simple walk with a developer can preserve these ancient assets with benefit to him, as well as the future homeowner, the local wildlife, and the ecosystem as a whole for centuries to come.



California's southwest desert region is developing at unprecedented levels and mosaics of native vegetation such as this are quickly disappearing. After centuries of delicate balance, our deserts are being altered today in ways that are changing the landscape for millennia to come, with many of its assets never realized or utilized.



Native landscaping can offer you a beneficial, maintenance-free privacy screen to separate your home from the sights and sounds of neighbors and streets.

Timing is critical here: one developer has asked SummerTree to advise him in replanting his own bare two-acre homesite with natives, the very same plants that he just removed several months ago before beginning construction of his home. While replanting of natives is the intelligent choice, it is a poor substitute for what has been removed. The plants that were removed were several hundred years old, and newly planted ones will take decades to attain the landscape and habitat value of those removed.

The building of hundreds of thousands of new homes in fragile ecosystems, such as our deserts, needs to be well-thought out to preserve irreplaceable and beneficial gifts from the land. Lack of awareness of the free but invaluable resources on each parcel of land can result in the loss of ancient specimen trees and hardy long-lived plants. These losses can create lasting landscape problems, soil erosion, dependence on irrigation, weed invasions, and much unnecessary effort.



Developing a New Source of Knowledge ...The Data Base



Determining the age of a pinyon pine using an increment borer to extract a core so that the growth rings may be counted.



The core being extracted from a pinyon pine determined to be over 300 years old. The plant is then sealed where the core was removed to prevent any possible damage to the tree or shrub.



This core will be saved along with many others taken from "Ancients" all over the southwest. This collection will be part of the SummerTree database on native plants.

SummerTree is currently dating native trees and larger shrubs in order to attain more information on the ages of various size plants for future site visits and publications. Some of these plants have been removed during previous construction efforts, and some have died recently due to the extended drought in the southwest. Ancient trees, including pinyon pines, and older arborescent (tree-like) shrubs, such as juniper, mountain mahogany, manzanita, sugarbush, and scrub oaks, are being sampled with core borers to determine their ages in order to calibrate **TIMEREADER** cards for each species' lifespan.

"Student Log Sheets are being distributed to teachers as part of the **SAVING THE ANCIENTS** Field Kits, which provide data sheets to record ages, diameters, and locations of native plants measured by students in field ecology and botany classes.

Ages, sizes, and locations of native ancient plants will be measured, and later recorded by students on the SummerTree website to add to our database on native plants.

The oldest specimens found will be tagged, recorded, and added to SummerTree's "Registry of Historic Desert Native Plants". Owners of parcels with "Historic Plants" will be informed of their presence as they become known. If owners are aware of the special significance of specimen plants on their land before developing or altering their land, they may choose to incorporate these legends into their plans.

Desert plants have wide lifespan ranges, some as short as a few months in wildflowers, and some over thousands of years in trees and shrubs. While little definitive research has been done on aging most desert species, here are some typical known lifespans for some plants in the Mojave and Sonoran Desert regions.

Oldest known ages of some our southwest desert plants:

California Juniper	1000+ years
Mojave Yucca	200+ years
Barrel Cactus	130+ years
California Ephedra	150+ years
Honey Mesquite	200+ years
Desert Wild Plum	200+ years
Ironwood	800+ years
Creosote Bush	14,000+ years
Pinyon Pine	500+ years
Scrub Oak	300+ years
Ocotillo	200 years

The Wisdom of Nurturing Natives

Especially in southern California, we are used to seeing sweeping developments, postwar model tracts of houses planted with green lawns and plants from tropical zones, regardless of the area, with little consideration for the ecosystem, it's water supply, climate, or local wildlife. The price that we are paying for these developments is too much pesticide, too much herbicide, wasted water, insect infestations, black mold, constant replacement of unsuccessful plants for the particular climate, large gardening fees, and the eventual pollution of the groundwater.

SummerTree's **SAVING THE ANCIENTS** program is dedicated to the belief that most people will change their viewpoint, and perhaps their behavior, if they are aware of the advantages—both to their lives and to the planet—of another viewpoint, especially if it also benefits their pocketbook. SummerTree encourages the investing of time in efforts that don't involve trade-offs, but involve efforts where everyday behaviors benefit everyone's lives.



Incorporating existing mature native plants into landscaping and development plans enhances privacy, beauty, and property value of a home.



Landscape utilizing native plants from arid southern California, including Mojave yucca, desert almond, desert wild plum, brittlebush and cleveland sage.

Through **SAVING THE ANCIENTS**, we are spreading awareness of unappreciated gifts from the land, and nurturing the safe keeping of treasures that last over multiple human lifetimes, returning us to a relationship with our environment.

Can we pass on to future generations a legacy as rich as that which has been left for us?

To learn more about **SAVING THE ANCIENTS**, or to make a contribution toward this program, please visit the SummerTree Institute's website at [www.summertree.org], or call (760) 363-7229.

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a nonprofit endeavor

How you can make a lasting difference through **SAVING THE ANCIENTS**

The SummerTree Institute's purpose is to link people with their long and rich connections to the earth. **SAVING THE ANCIENTS** is one of our programs aimed precisely toward that goal. If you've discovered anything about this program that ignites your interest, concern, or passion, you can help us to make a tangible, lasting difference to the land, the people caring for it and the animals that share this incredible environment with us. Not only can we bring change for the better now, but we will be investing in a landscape which will enhance its value over many hundreds of years.

If this program inspires someone to plant an ancient native plant with a typical five hundred-year lifespan, such as a pinyon pine or western juniper, at least 30 generations of humans and over 500 generations of quail or other small animals would benefit from the life of that particular tree. If one hundred people each decide to plant a long-lived native plant in their own yard or town center, soon the landscape would be enriched to give more (and take less) for many generations to come.

The cost of awareness

SummerTree has completely underwritten the design, modeling, prototyping, and testing of **SAVING THE ANCIENTS** products and services. We are now seeking continued funding for the rapid expansion of the program. This funding will support the following activities:

- Public lectures
- On-site informative field visits for landowners and city planners
- Production and distribution of local and regional documentaries
- Local **SAVING THE ANCIENTS** television updates to drive community involvement
- Brochures
- Teaching and data capturing tools for students
- Instructional video and DVD presentations for homeowners, landscape designers, teachers, and others

If awareness is not raised on a broad scale, acre after acre of valuable plant resources and habitat will be needlessly lost each day — perhaps irreversibly.



What's happening today.

Your involvement is critical

Our campaign aims to raise awareness quickly, and across a vast enough segment of the population to affect a significant difference in the mindset of California and southwest dwellers, their landscape choices, their behavior toward native habitats, and the lifestyle they choose to embrace, which can easily enrich their lives.

The SummerTree Institute's goal is to raise \$275,000 this quarter to launch **SAVING THE ANCIENTS**. We are seeking several major donor pledges for the initial program launch, as well as pledges for continuing smaller donations during the sixteen month program initial implementation and expansion phase.

This is a very exciting journey. We welcome your participation in this most needed program. Any interest you have in helping to support this endeavor would be greatly appreciated, both by the Institute and by all those who will benefit for many generations to come.

**The SummerTree Institute is a
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All donations are tax-deductible



With a small amount of planning, you can have the best of both worlds: your home and a landscape that incorporates your established native plants.