Trees of Mountain View Cemetery
Oakland, California

A Self-Guided Tour
Welcome to Mountain View Cemetery

Here you will find an urban rarity, a large open space that is home to a diverse collection of trees from around the world — some common and some rare — in a setting designed by the famed Frederick Law Olmsted. This booklet describes many of these species, each keyed to a point on a self-guiding map at the back of the booklet.

Frederick Law Olmsted at Mountain View

Olmsted is best known for his role in creating New York’s Central Park as well as other parks in the eastern United States. Few are aware that he also spent time in California, or that his experiences here had a direct impact on his final career choice of landscape architecture.

Having proven himself an able superintendent of the U.S. Sanitary Commission during the Civil War, Olmsted was enticed by John C. Fremont to accept a position as administrator of his Mariposa Estate in California’s Bear Valley. Olmsted arrived in San Francisco in 1863 to assume this new position, but the once-booming Mariposa mine was soon depleted and mired in a legal battle. Olmsted struggled to succeed for a time, but by late 1864 he had moved on. He played a role in forming the Yosemite Commission, then was retained by the trustees of Mountain View to lay out the grounds of their new “rural” cemetery.

Begun in 1864 and completed in 1866, Mountain View was the first California commission in Olmsted’s prodigious career. It was also his first design for a semi-arid climate profoundly different from the East Coast climate with which he was familiar. Though Olmsted was a prolific designer, his

---

Margaret, are you grieving
Over Goldengrove unleaving?
Leaves, like the things of man, you
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?

Ah! as the heart grows older
It will come to such sights colder
By and by, nor spare a sigh
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;
And yet you will weep and know why.

Now no matter, child, the name:
Sorrow’s springs are the same.
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed
What heart heard of, ghost guessed:
It is the blight man was born for,
It is Margaret you mourn for.

Gerard Manley Hopkins
Spring and Fall: To a young child
work at Mountain View is the only instance where he played a significant role in the design of a cemetery. In his “Preface to the Plan for Mountain View Cemetery,” Olmsted poses a question about what is desired, and answers: “A place for our common grief, our common hopes, and our common faith; a place wherein we may see and feel our sympathy, one with another. This place of burial must pay respect to the community of the dead.”

Olmsted urged the Mountain View Trustees to “confine your choices of trees to a small number... using large trees of simple form and color.” He preferred dark foliage, and specifically recommended Italian Cypress, Italian Stone Pine, Monterey Cypress, Cedar of Lebanon and Live Oaks. He explained that Eucalyptus were not a good choice because of their vulnerability to wind, and was silent on Palms. What would he say were he to visit today and see 80-plus species of trees represented, including the exotic Dawn Redwood, the ancient Ginkgo, the showy Flowering Plums, the thirsty Weeping Willow, the emphatic Monkey Puzzle Tree, and of course the Palms and ubiquitous Eucalyptus?

How to use this book

For your personal tour, use the map on the inside back cover (along with the convenient reference index) to find and identify the trees in the numbered photographs that follow.
Southern Magnolia

Magnolia grandiflora

The stately Southern Magnolia is used strategically at Mountain View to line the Main Drive between the second and third fountains. When landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted came to California from the East, he became very aware of the dramatic difference in the West Coast climate and recommended using plants with dark, glossy leaves—like those of the Southern Magnolia—to suggest a lush landscape. Native to the southeast United States, the Magnolia is probably the most widely cultivated tree, and is ideal as a street tree in parks and gardens. The name “grandiflora” refers to its large, showy flower. The flower’s simple construction indicates that the Magnolia is among the most ancient trees in the world.

Lombardy Poplar

Populus nigra ‘Italica’

This tall, columnar tree, located at the cemetery entrance just west of the Gothic Chapel, emphatically points toward heaven, giving direction to Mountain View’s residents. In fall, the Poplar turns to gold before losing its leaves. It is a fast-growing common tree notorious for its invasive, moisture-seeking roots that can wreak havoc with drain lines. The Poplar was introduced in the United States in 1784, and can grow to 90 feet. Another, more unusual species of Poplar, Populus alba pyramidalis, can be found near the second and third fountains. It has white bark and looks rather scruffy due in part to its age. All Poplars are relatively short-lived.
Weeping Willow  
*Salix babylonica*

Long, gracefully weeping branches of the Weeping Willow are an ideal shape to signify sorrow and, as such, are well-suited to the cemetery. This excellent specimen is found just inside the entry gate, and appropriately spills over a pond and cascade. The Chinese believe that, in addition to being a symbol of grief and mourning, the Weeping Willow represents the powers of resurgent spring. In Japan it indicates patience and perseverance. It is frequently used on grave markers (see the inside front cover) and on memorial samplers made by young girls. Memorial engravings from the 18th century often included a Weeping Willow. The species is fast-growing and relatively short-lived compared to other trees.

Flowering Cherry  
*Prunus serrulata ‘Kwanzan’*

These Kwanzan Flowering Cherry trees at the cemetery office were planted in 2006 as part of a renovation of the landscape at Mountain View. SWA Landscape Architects designed a new entry, refurbished the fountains, and made several other improvements to the infrastructure and plantings. The Flowering Cherry grows to 30 feet tall with a 20-foot diameter and produces large, double, deep pink flowers in late spring. Of all the flowering trees that grow commonly in the Bay Area, the Kwanzan Cherry is one of the most reliable. It is well-suited to small gardens with good drainage. This is the variety of the 200 flowering cherry trees planted in Washington, D.C., along the Tidal Basin.
Deodar Cedar
*Cedrus deodara*

Deodar Cedars are found throughout Mountain View Cemetery. Each is a sculptural specimen with graceful, horizontal branching and a distinctly drooping top. Deodars grow to 150 feet or more, are native to the Himalaya Mountains and were introduced to the United States in 1831. Cedars are the trees most often mentioned in the Bible, and are always noted as a symbol of fruitfulness and strength. Deodar Cedars are gray-green in color and have bunches of short needles in clumps. The barrel-shaped cones are tight and scale-like. In India the wood of this tree is used for incense. Another excellent example of Deodar Cedar is at the Miller pyramid on Millionaires’ Row (see page 1).

Camphor Tree
*Cennemomum camphora*

The Camphor is distinctly yellow-green with shiny, medium-sized leaves. The overall form is broadly round-headed, and grows wide rather than tall. It has a roughly furrowed bark and is notorious for heaving sidewalk paving, making it a poor street tree but excellent for parks and large planting spaces, as it is used here at Mountain View in a small grove near Potter’s Field. When crushed, the leaves give off a camphor smell. It has inconspicuous fragrant yellow flowers in spring. The Camphor is native to China and Japan, where it grows to 40 feet. Camphor is distilled from its twigs and leaves.
**Sweet Gum**  
*Liquidambar styraciflua*

Stately Liquidambar trees line the main drive of Mountain View Cemetery. They are tall, columnar trees growing to 80 feet or more in height. Leaves have five to seven lobes, somewhat Maple-like in form. In fall, the Liquidambar is one of a few species of trees that provide excellent fall color in our mild Bay Area climate. Sweet Gums are native to the Eastern United States, Mexico and Central America, where they can grow to 150 feet. The wood of the Liquidambar is used to make furniture, as a veneer, and for cabinets.

**Copper Beech**  
*Fagus sylvatica ‘Atropurpurea’*

Native to central and southwestern Europe, the Copper Beech is rarely planted in the Bay Area because of its immense size. Given enough space to mature, however, it proves to be a tree of distinct grandeur. The Copper Beech, to the right of the mausoleum main entry, is an excellent specimen with rich burgundy, deeply veined leaves. The Beech was introduced to the United States in 1872 and is a symbol of prosperity and pleasant memories—a fitting tree for a cemetery. The Copper Beech can reach 90 feet in height and makes a graceful, large-scale shade tree.
**Italian Cypress**

*Cupressus sempervirens ‘Italica’*

The Italian Cypress is the quintessential cemetery tree, representing eternal life. In Olmsted’s narrative on the design concept of Mountain View Cemetery he specifically suggested that the “heaven-pointing spires of the immortal Cypress” would prompt “the consolations of faith.” The mature tree is simple and dignified in form, dark in color, and no tree in Europe is known to have more persistent vitality. Being an evergreen—and seeming more than any other tree to point toward heaven — it has always been symbolic of immortality. In the group of columnar trees, it is the most rigidly erect and narrowest of them all. For formal gardens, where vertical lines are needed to define space, this tree is ideal.

---

**Saucer Magnolia**

*Magnolia soulangiana*

Saucer Magnolia is also known as the Tulip Tree because the large pink flowers are somewhat tulip-shaped. The Saucer Magnolia is one of the earliest spring-blooming trees, starting in late January or early February. Flowers appear before the leaves, resulting in a spectacular floral display—harbinger of the coming spring. Flower colors range from creamy white to pink to purplish rose. The rounded, multi-trunk tree grows to 25 feet high and 25 feet wide. This photo was taken at the main mausoleum. Another specimen can be found in front of the Gothic Chapel near the cemetery entrance. Saucer Magnolia is a tree hybrid developed in France about 1820.
Ginkgo
*Ginkgo biloba*

The Ginkgo, also known as the Maidenhair Tree, is unique among trees. It is the sole survivor of a family that existed when the dinosaurs roamed the earth. The fan-shaped leaf resembles the leaflet of the Maidenhair Fern, and is found in no other flowering plant. The species name “biloba” refers to the bi-lobed leaf. Because the Ginkgo’s manner of fertilization is similar to the ferns, botanists have called it a missing link between flowering plants and ferns. Ginkgos can reach 100 feet in maturity. There is no known case of Ginkgos growing naturally in the wild, but for many centuries Buddhists have planted and cared for these trees on temple grounds in China, Korea and Japan. These efforts may have saved the species from extinction.

Coast Redwood
*Sequoia sempervirens*

The Coast Redwood is the tallest-growing tree at Mountain View and in the world. They commonly reach 100 feet, and there is a known specimen measuring 367 feet tall. Virgin Redwoods once lined the ridge line of Oakland’s hills, but they were logged and brought across Antonio Peralta’s land to the Oakland estuary, where they were loaded on ships and taken to San Francisco for the construction of Victorian-style homes. Redwoods are planted throughout the cemetery. This specimen is in plot 45, which is set aside as a memorial to those who gave their lives during war. In the Southwest corner, to the right after you enter the cemetery, a grove of Redwoods provides a sense of grandeur at the Potter’s Field or “Stranger’s Plot,” where indigent persons are buried.
Monkey Puzzle Tree

Araucaria araucana

The Monkey Puzzle is one of Mountain View’s unusual, exotic trees. Native to Chile, it grows 70 to 90 feet tall. Its shiny, sharply-pointed leaves wrap around the branches to form weird branchlets. The furrowed, lumpy bark is also characteristic. Monkey Puzzle was introduced to the United States in 1795, and was a favorite of Victorian-era gardeners who sought out specimens of exotic species as a way to display their wealth and interest in gardens. It was not uncommon for gardens of that period to include single examples of an assortment of imported trees. Each would be planted around the public areas of an estate and surrounded by lawns as a display. One can see the remnants of these gardens in many places like Mosswood and DeFremery Parks in Oakland.

Pepper Tree

Schinus molle

The weeping form of the California Pepper is another appropriate planting at Mountain View to acknowledge a sense of sorrow and grieving. Similar in form to the Weeping Willow, the Pepper is better suited to California’s dry climate. Schinus molle is native to South America, where the Incas considered the tree to be sacred. They revered the tree as their most important medicinal tree. Every part of the tree was used as medicine—the bark to remedy stomach aches and flatulence, while the berries were brewed to make a sweet acid-tasting beverage to soothe nerves.
Giant Sequoia 15
Sequoiadendron gigantea

One of two species of Redwoods native to California, the Giant Sequoia grows to 325 feet tall. It is the oldest and most massive of all living things, links our civilization with the dim records of the past. John Muir called it “the noblest of a noble race.” Flourishing trees that now stand in California groves were swaying in the Sierra winds when Christ walked the earth. These trees of the Sequoia group are remnants of an ancient race, which flourished as far north as the Arctic Zone during Tertiary and Cretaceous times. The trunk can reach 30 feet in diameter. Its conical form is one of Mountain View’s most impressive heaven-pointing trees. Its dark, dense foliage conveys a somber strength.

Purple Leaf Plum 16
Prunus cerasifera ‘Atropurpurea’

A ubiquitous tree in Oakland, the Purple Leaf Plum is favored because of its profusion of pink blossoms in early spring. As the shower of pink petals fall, they are replaced by vibrant burgundy-colored leaves. At Mountain View, Purple Leaf Plums were planted in 2006 to encircle the Towne tomb in plot 18A. Their flower is a symbol of beauty and longevity. A small tree reaching 25 feet in height, the Purple Leaf Plum is well-suited to small gardens. The varieties ‘Thundercloud’ and ‘Bliriana’ are two commonly planted improved hybrids. ‘Bliriana’ is favored for its long-lasting double flowers. This tree was introduced in 1890 from what was then known as Persia, today called Iran.
**Yew**  
*Taxus baccata*

The Yew has long been considered to have a religious significance. It has been looked upon as a sacred tree, and its association with churches and burial grounds has given rise to many curious legends. Its somber, melancholy appearance is thought to be symbolic of sorrow, sadness and death, while the great age it attains and its evergreen character are signs of immortality and resurrection. It is slow-growing and extraordinarily long-lived. The Yew was introduced in Oakland in 1871. These three Taxus surround the grave of author Frank Norris. The fruit is a fleshy, coral-colored berry that is poisonous, as are all other parts of the tree. Oddly, however, Taxus is useful in treating cancer. This ancient tree is known to have existed during prehistoric times.

**Olive**  
*Olea europaea*

Known to be one of the oldest cultivated trees, Olives extend back to the Neolithic Age. In Greek legend, Poseidon and Athene clashed over naming rights for the city of Athens. The gods decided that the one who gave the best gift to mankind should have this honor. Poseidon struck the seashore with his trident and there sprang forth the horse; Athene smote the ground with her spear, and the olive tree arose. Athene’s gift of the olive—a symbol of peace—was decreed better for humanity than Poseidon’s horse—an emblem of war—and the new city was named Athens. The Olive is also a symbol of fidelity and of achievement, which is why Olympians were crowned with an olive wreath. It was first planted at Mission San Diego in 1769, by Father Junipero Serra.
Incense Cedar
*Calocedrus decurrens*
This towering conifer grows 70 to 110 feet in height—with one known specimen measuring 186 feet—and is native to California and Oregon. Its columnar form provides a bold, heaven-pointing landmark. Its flat sprays of scale-like leaves release a pungent odor when crushed. The wood of the Incense Cedar is used to make pencils, cedar chests, window sashes and cigar boxes. The tree thrives in blazing summer heat and poor soil and is drought-tolerant—though it prefers good soil and some moisture. The Incense Cedar grows naturally at elevations of 4,000 to 8,000 feet, and ranges for a 1,000 miles southward from the Santiam River in Oregon, along the Cascade Mountains and western Sierra Nevada. Incense Cedar is slow-growing and very long-lived.

Monterey Cypress
*Cupressus macrocarpa*
The Monterey Cypress is another of the few species specifically suggested by Olmsted as suitable for the Mountain View site. He felt that the dense, horizontal form—like the Oaks and Italian Stone Pine—served to complement the “heaven-pointing” forms of other columnar trees. Writing his “Preface to the Plan for Mountain View Cemetery” in May 1865, Olmsted noted: “It is common in your gardens, and the finest specimen I have seen stands within a quarter of a mile of your ground”. Monterey Cypress is native to California’s Monterey coastline, where it withstands salt-laden ocean breezes to form sculptural, picturesque specimens favored by photographers.
Coast Live Oak  
*Quercus agrifolia*

When landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted designed Mountain View Cemetery, he noted that “The brooding forms of the coppices and the canopy of the cedars would unite in the expression of sheltering care extended over the place of the dead.” The Live Oak offers broad, sheltering branches. Of all the trees in prehistoric times, the Oak was the most widely venerated. In the mythologies of many ancient tribes it was believed to be the first tree created, and that man sprang from it. The Oak is a symbol of fortitude and strength. It was the preferred wood for making barrels for wine and for ship-building. In Europe, vast areas were scarred by the cutting of Oaks for ships.

Dawn Redwood  
*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*

The Dawn Redwood is one of Mountain View Cemetery’s most distinguished species, known to have existed in prehistoric times. It is one of the very few deciduous conifers, meaning that it loses its leaves in winter. In spring, the new growth is a soft yellow-green, much like the California Redwood in form. In fall, the needle-like leaves turn golden yellow. The trunk is deeply furrowed and twisted. The Dawn Redwood is native to China and can grow to 90 feet or more. The species was discovered in 1941 and imported to the United States in 1948. In 1958, Dr. Ralph Chaney gave this specimen to Mountain View cemetery.
Tulip Tree  Liriodendron tulipifera

The Tulip Tree is so named because of its uniquely shaped leaf that, when turned upright, resembles a tulip. The flowers are also tulip-shaped. This stately species is possibly the tallest growing deciduous tree (one that loses its leaves) in the world. Specimens have been found measuring 200 feet in height. Normally they grow from 30 to 50 feet tall. Native Americans used the trunks of these trees to make canoes, and it is said that Daniel Boone carved a 60-foot canoe from a Liriodendron—using it to transport his family and their belongings down the Ohio River from Kentucky. Its flower is two inches long, a tulip-like pale green blossom in May or June.

Lawson Cypress  Chamaecyparis lawsoniana

Mountain View has several columnar coniferous trees that are somewhat rare and unusual for the Bay Area, including this isolated specimen of Lawson Cypress. Other examples of Lawson Cypress can be found along our Main Avenue opposite the main mausoleum. It is likely that most of these trees were planted very early during the Olmsted era; as an Easterner, he would have been familiar with these coniferous trees. See Japanese Cryptomeria (No. 28) for a list of other columnar coniferous trees planted at Mountain View. The Lawson Cypress is native to southwestern Oregon and north-western California. It can reach 120 feet in height.
Norfolk Island Pine
*Araucaria heterophylla*

The Norfolk Island Pine, an unusual and exotic tree, is one of two species of Araucaria found at Mountain View Cemetery. It can reach 100 feet in height and 60 feet in width in its native environment near Australia. The other species found here is Araucaria araucana, the Monkey Puzzle Tree (No. 13). Both are conifers prized for their unusual form and foliage. The Norfolk Island Pine has short, needle-like leaves surrounding long branchlets. It presents a picturesque form and is another example of a unique tree that would have been favored by the Victorian-era gardener.

Date Palm
*Phoenix canariensis*

This row of four Date Palms can be found on Millionaires’ Row. The Date Palm is one of the most ancient symbolic forms of the Tree of Life. Palm leaves are used in many religions to signify welcome or triumph over adversity. The botanical name Phoenix has many meanings – one referring to the immortal bird of Egyptian mythology, another to the embodiment of the sun god. Olmsted made no mention of Palms in his narrative for Mountain View, presumably preferring trees with full form and dense canopies of foliage. Each leaf, or frond, can grow to 15 feet in length. The fruit is prolific and edible, but not as choice as those sold in stores and produced by a different species of date palm.
Blue Atlas Cedar  
*Cedrus atlantica ‘Glauca’*

Mountain View has a few Blue Atlas Cedars, each offering an emphatic sculptural form. The silvery blue-colored conifer is unique. Native to North Africa, it is a deep-rooted and drought-tolerant tree that needs ample space to be fully appreciated. There is also a green version of the Atlas Cedar, but it is rarely used. Blue Atlas Cedar can grow to 120 in height and 40 feet in width. It was introduced to the United States before 1840. The tree does well planted in lawns and requires little maintenance. Mature cones are three inches by two inches of tightly held scales that take two years to mature.

Japanese Cryptomeria  
*Cryptomeria Japonica*

This Japanese Cryptomeria on the main allee, opposite the main mausoleum, is one of several species of columnar, coniferous trees found at Mountain View Cemetery. Other species with similar forms include the Scotch Pine on the Main Avenue, the Narrow Arborvitae at Jack Coffee Hays’ grave, the Yews and Italian Cypress in front of the main mausoleum, and the Lawson Cypress. A Plume Cryptomeria—*Cryptomeria japonica ‘Elegans’*, an unusual variety of Japanese Cryptomeria—can be found near the Shoong Tomb to the right along the Main Avenue. Cryptomeria is native to Japan and was introduced in the United States in 1861. Cryptomeria is closely related to the Giant Sequoia. The Cryptomeria at Mountain View were likely planted during Olmsted’s era.
The Trees of Mountain View Cemetery

1. Southern Magnolia
2. Lombardy Poplar
3. Weeping Willow
4. Flowering Cherry
5. Deodar Cedar
6. Camphor
7. Sweet Gum
8. Copper Beech
9. Italian Cypress
10. Saucer Magnolia
11. Gingko
12. Cost Redwood
13. Monkey Puzzle Tree
14. Pepper Tree
15. Giant Sequoia
16. Purple Leaf Plum
17. Yew
18. Olive
19. Incense Cedar
20. Monterey Cypress
21. Coast Live Oak
22. Dawn Redwood
23. Tulip Tree
24. Lawson Cypress
25. Norfolk Island Pine
26. Date Palm
27. Blue Atlas Cedar
28. Japanese Cryptomeria

A Dracaena grows behind the monument to Goodall on Millionaires’ Row.
© 2008 Mountain View Docents
The Mountain View Docents offer guided history tours at the cemetery on the second and fourth Saturday of each month. Tours start at the cemetery office at 10:00 a.m., last approximately two hours, and usually involve walking on steep, difficult paths.

Your donation to the Mountain View Docents supports printing of this booklet.

Special thanks to:
Graphics by Chris Pattillo with Ernest Grafe, Oakland
Tree identification assistance: Barrie Coate, Horticulturalist
Carolyn Kemp
Michael Carrillo Design