

Walnut trees are dying off

New disease takes its toll on Davis' urban forest

By Steven J. Seybold and Charles A. Leslie
SPECIAL TO THE ENTERPRISE

Many of the majestic Northern California black walnut trees that line city streets and county roads in the Davis area are dead or dying.

Healthy black walnut trees used to be everywhere. They still provide a green canopy along west Russell Boulevard. In East Davis, they mark the promenade to the old Isaac Chiles ranch property (Mace Ranch), which is now the approach to the Dave Pelz Bike Overcrossing between Second and Fifth streets. An 1800s-era historical photo in the Hattie Weber Museum in Davis depicts clearly the two rows of walnut trees leading south from the old ranch house, which is now home to the Explorit Nature Center.

A beautiful specimen of black walnut shades diners in the courtyard of Sophia's Thai Bar and Kitchen in downtown Davis; another guards the approach to downtown Davis at First and E streets.

These trees, native to riparian areas of Northern California, also border many of the rural roads around Yolo County — notably Pedrick Road, which joins Dixon to Woodland, and many roads north of Woodland.

The Northern California black walnut is a common nut-producing tree along Putah and Cache creeks, and elsewhere in the lower Sacramento River Valley. It even occurs in the steep canyons that punctuate the slopes of Mount Diablo. These ecologically significant trees produce valuable food for wildlife, and many local residents remember, fondly or not, collecting the nuts for home use or pocket money.

All that may change.

Today many of these walnut trees, an important component of the urban forest of Davis and its environs, appear to be dying from thousand cankers disease, spread by the tiny walnut twig beetle.

The city of Davis landmark "Avenue of the Trees," a 2-mile section off Russell Boulevard west of Highway 113, could be threatened by this disease. Back in 1874, 18 residents west of Davisville petitioned the Yolo County Board of Supervisors to create a road between Davis and Winters.

Hugh LaRue, a former speaker of the state Assembly, a University of California regent, and founder of the UC Davis Ag Experiment Station, and his family members planted more than 500 of the original Northern California black walnuts along this road around 1876.

Because it was founded with the support of a California statute, the vision of this beautifully shaded road was meant to be emblematic for the state, but for local residents it meant an important way of keeping the Central Valley dust in check.

At the time, the LaRues owned and operated Arlington Farm, encompassing most of what today is West Davis, west of Highway 113. Their original farmhouse, tucked along the Avenue of Trees, still exists at 2727 Russell Blvd. Area residents battled to save the Avenue of Trees when the city sought their removal in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

They won.

Now the trees, already weakened by mistletoe, are under attack by the walnut twig beetle and are showing evidence of thousand cankers disease.



COURTESY PHOTO

Black walnut trees line a 2-mile section of Russell Boulevard west of Highway 113 in this California Department of Highways and Public Works photo, circa 1961. The landmark trees could be threatened with thousand cankers disease.

Black walnut trees also have been dying along Pedrick Road between Russell Boulevard and the Pedrick Produce stand, and deteriorating along Mace Boulevard in northeast Davis and along Eighth Street, near Pole Line Road. In early June 2008, we collected recently infected branches from walnut trees that were declining in front of newly constructed homes on Cassel Road in northwest Davis.

Although construction activity likely catalyzed the demise of these trees, our colleagues at Colorado State University also found evidence of thousand cankers disease in them, the same beetle-fungus complex that is appearing rapidly throughout the western United States.

In nearby Winters, native black walnut trees are dying along Putah Creek. Many other species of walnuts are showing disease symptoms in the USDA ARS National Clonal Germplasm Collection, on the historic Wolf-skill Farms property in Winters.

We have to ask ourselves: What would Davis and its surrounding communities and rural highways look like without their landmark walnut trees? Potentially more troubling to the economy of the state are the questions: What is the risk to the commercial walnut industry and will this disease also infect the English walnut trees, *Juglans regia*, which are the backbone of the industry?

In 2006, walnut growers in the United States, primarily California, produced 346,000 tons of nuts on 243,000 acres with a farm gate value of \$564 million. The United States is the world's largest exporter of walnuts with exports of in-shell and shelled walnuts exceeding \$310 million.

Since the beetle appears to prefer to overwinter at the base tree trunks, it could infest the black walnut rootstock commonly used in commercial orchards. Although early hopeful indications are that English walnut trees are less likely to be infected than native black walnuts, scientists have identified the walnut twig beetle and cankers caused by *Geosmithia* from branches and stems of English walnut in both Utah and California. This means that the insect-pathogen complex may even impact the above-ground portion of the trees that produce California's multimillion-dollar commercial walnut crop.

The threat to the industry and the changes to our urban and rural landscapes from this recently recognized disease deserve our attention now and in the years to come.

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Teachable moment on race: lost in the suds?

By Jonathan London
SPECIAL TO THE ENTERPRISE

By now the mainstream media has lost the scent of last month's leading news about the arrest for disorderly conduct, the dropping of all charges, and White House beer summit for Harvard Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. and his arresting officer, Sgt. James Crowley of the Cambridge, Mass., Police Department.

The pundits and headlines are now lit up by issues such as health care reform, and not the "he said, he said" of the Gates-gate. (And, if you care at all about quality and affordable health care, run, don't walk, to the phone or computer now and demand that the Obama administration and the Senate maintain their support for the "public option.")

This column was filled last month so ably by my colleague, Dr. Jann Murray-García, with crucial insights about the racial implications and possibilities of the Gates affair. And yet, I remain unsatisfied. I wonder what has been learned through what President Obama referred to as a "teachable moment" in U.S. race relations. I am especially concerned that several elements of what I would call a white anti-racist perspective have been overlooked in the press and popular discourse.

First, what do I mean by white anti-racism? While there are many definitions, I understand this is to be a process by which European-Americans critically reflect on the privileges afforded them by their whiteness and align themselves with causes and movements that seek to dismantle racial hierarchies.

A sample of relevant Web sites includes:

- Crossroads: <http://www.crossroadsantiracism.org/index.sxml>;
- Challenging White Supremacy: <http://www.cswsworkshop.org/about.html>; and

- Pax Christi: http://www.paxchristi.usa.org/pc_brothers_sisters.asp

How would a white anti-racist perspective apply in the controversy over the arrest of Dr. Gates? First, it would encourage me not to focus exclusively on the individual dimension — the conflict between Dr. Gates and Sgt. Crowley — and instead to see the broader implications.

As much as I admire President Obama for proactively bringing these two antagonists together at the White House, I worry that such an event sent the wrong, or at least, incomplete message. Yes, there was a conflict between these two men that ended badly and needed resolution — but the deeper conflict between people of color and police over racial profiling and inequitable justice systems may have been lost in the suds.

By focusing on Gates vs. Crowley, we can miss the workings of institutional factors such as housing segregation that made it seem unusual to see a black man in this upper-middle class neighborhood, educational inequities that made Dr. Gates not fit the general image of "university professor," and racialized police-relations that made being angry with a policeman a crime for a black man.

Seen from this more institutional racism perspective, we can ask how these factors also may play out in Davis and what kinds of proactive responses are possible to prevent such an event here. While the racial profiling scandals of recent years have receded, the broader phenomenon of



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JUST US IN DAVIS

driving or shopping while black (or brown, etc.) remains an issue in Davis.

Second, a white anti-racist perspective would encourage us to go beyond being merely entertained or even outraged by the events out there and ask how we are ourselves implicated, if only indirectly and what response is necessary. In this way I see Sgt. Crowley as representative of the force of the law dedicated to protect my interests as a member of the home-owning and white public against the disorder of black trespass. If he is acting on my behalf, then what is my responsibility for his actions? What redress do I need to make to Dr. Gates and to African-Americans (and other people of color)?

An anti-racist stance demands that I do not passively accept the systems — such as the police — deployed on my behalf as a white person. Instead, some form of resistance is called for. In my case as an academic and (very part-time) columnist, my resistance flows from my pen. Other forms of action could include support for organizations such as ACLU, the Ella Baker Center or Prison Moratorium Project that work to reform the criminal justice system.

This perspective is akin to the Jewish practice at Passover to refer to the Exodus as our own deliverance from slavery and to reflect on how far we still have to go toward freedom for ourselves and for others around the world. In that case, we could consider Dr. Gates' arrest (perceived to be a stranger in his own home) as our own incarceration, his exoneration as our own freedom. But we can also reflect on Sgt. Crowley with compassion, doing the job he was paid to do, part of a system not of his own making.

Third, and finally, to live as a white anti-racist is to live in a world of wounds — one's own, and those that are inflicted on others on our behalf. Racism hurts white people as well as people of color (albeit differently and to different degrees). We were all wounded by the conflict on that porch in Cambridge just as we are by every wrongful traffic stop, incarceration or other similar racialized injustice in Davis and elsewhere.

Healing, in the conflict of Gates and Crowley, or the racial conflicts in our own community, must begin by a process of grieving for all involved: Gates, Crowley, you and me.

And after grief, action. How about we demand that the Davis Police Department (and while we're at it, the UC Davis Police Department) make their traffic stop data by race and ethnicity publicly available? How about a real police review board with enforcement authority? These would be meaningful steps in our long march to freedom.

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What do you think?

Who was your favorite teacher, and why?

Asked in downtown Davis

COMPILED AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY JANE SEED



Camilla Antonini
student, Italy:

"Teacher of history. She teaches very well and she was a very good person."



Joe Schairer
Target employee, Davis:

"The drama teacher Mr. Dodd back in junior high. He connected with students and was on a level with every single student."



Wesley Brookman
student, Davis:

"The band teacher Mr. Bower. He's a good teacher and can be funny sometimes."



Ethan Ireland
camera technician, Davis:

"My French teacher who was also my English teacher. She made learning both languages accessible and I'm friends with her to this day."



Alicia Santos-Coy
therapist, Sacramento:

"Sister Daniels because she brought English alive in literature. She made me love to read."



Victoria Hassid
student, Davis:

"Professor Imwinkelried. He has tremendous knowledge and respect for his students."