

FLORA AT SIX SIGMA RANCH

Fall 2021

Welcome to the Ranch!

As we get into fall with cooler temperatures, it's prime time for watching oak trees. Explore the oaks on our two most popular hikes, Hike #1, Sorensen Avenue and Hike #5, Eagle Rock Road.

Read more in our book *Oaks of Six Sigma Ranch*.



As always, we kindly ask you to stay on the roads and trails. If you're not yet familiar with Six Sigma Ranch, please make sure to pick up a trail guide before you head out.

10/01/2021

Oaks by the Tasting Room



Valley oaks are our biggest oak trees. They mainly grow close to the creeks at the ranch. Start your self-guided oak tour with a look at these majestic trees just outside the tasting room. Their colors change from dark green to warm yellow in late fall.



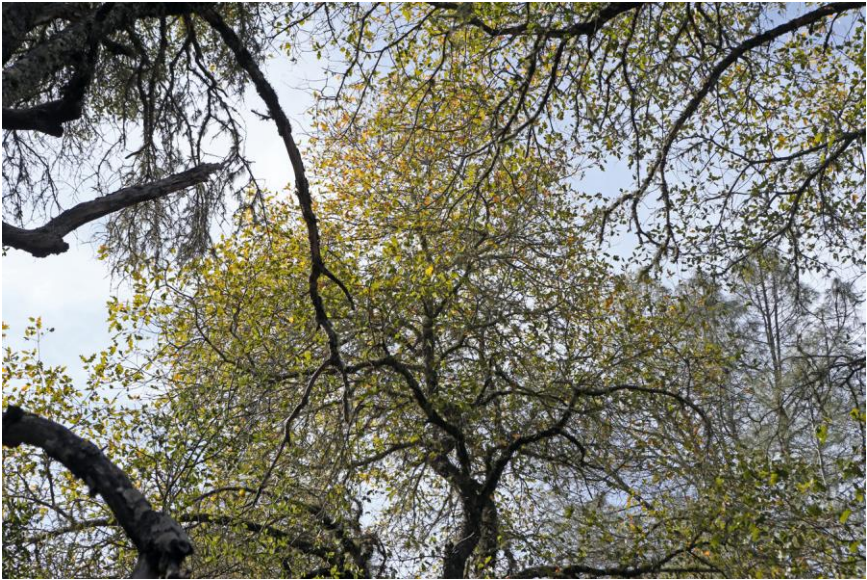
Oaks on Sorensen Avenue (Hike #1)



Start Hike #1 by crossing the bridge to get to Sorensen Avenue. You'll see a small *interior live oak* on the right side of the road.



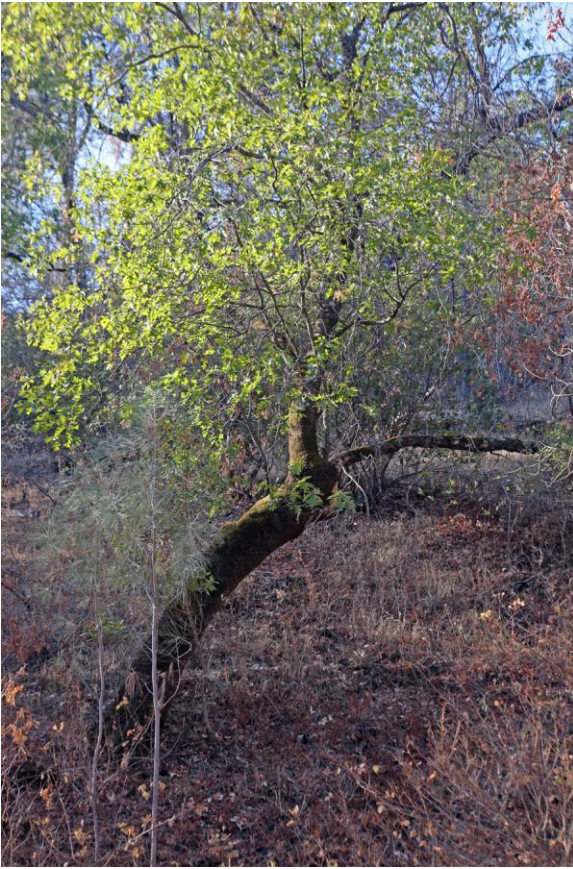
Blue oaks thrive on most of the ranch. Here, you'll find them on both sides of the road. The big tree pictured in the center was still bluish green, but it'll turn yellow later in the season.



“BONUS OAK”: The ranch is home for a small number of *oracle oaks*, a hybrid between a deciduous oak and an evergreen. In winter when all the deciduous oaks have dropped their leaves, you may get a glimpse of this one, deep in the valley on the right side of the road.



California scrub oaks thrive on meager soil, and you’ll find them on both sides of Sorensen Avenue. This one grows on the right side of the road about 0.8 miles from the bridge.



About 1 mile from the bridge is one of the best areas on the ranch to watch *black oak*, a beautiful tree that grows on the best soil. The leaves turn yellow or red in the fall.

Late wildflowers and seeds



Elegant Madia,
Tarweed



Narrow Tarplant



Seed on Mountain
Mahogany Tree



Seed on Wild Clematis



Seed on Buckeye
(shrub)

Oaks on Eagle Rock Road (Hike #5)



Eagle rock road leads towards the hay barn east of the tasting room. The trees by the gate are *blue oaks*. Their leaves turn yellow later in the season.



The shrub on the left side of the road before the barn is a *California scrub oak*.



We lost the biggest *black oak* tree that used to grow just before the first creek crossing but, fortunately, there are other nearby black oaks with big, pretty leaves that will take on yellow or red fall colors.



Some of the biggest *canyon live oaks* also grow by this creek crossing. The tree is common in the area, but the ranch is only home to a few of them.









A big *interior live oak* grows nearby.

A Simplified Identification Guide.







This simplified guide lists a number of traits that distinguish the six oaks mentioned.

The three deciduous species have thin, soft leaves that take on colors in the fall before they drop off, while the evergreen species have thick, rigid leaves that stay on the trees all year.




Deciduous Oaks: Leaves and Acorns

Blue oak	Valley oak	Black oak
 <p>Up to 3", oblong, with wavy margins or shallow lobes; mature leaves are bluish green.</p>	 <p>Up to 4", oblong, with deep lobes; mature leaves are dark green.</p>	 <p>Up to 8", with deep lobes ending in soft bristles; mature leaves are dark green.</p>
 <p>Acorn 1", oval, slightly tapered.</p> <p>Cup Shallow, with small round knobs.</p>	 <p>Acorn Up to 2.5", cartridge shaped.</p> <p>Cup Fairly deep, with warty knobs.</p>	 <p>Acorn 1-1.5".</p> <p>Cup Very deep, with thin, ragged, overlapping scales.</p>




Deciduous Oaks: Bark


Blue oak	Valley oak	Black oak
		
		
Very light gray, with narrow, shallow stripes or shallow scales.	Medium gray, striped or checkered in deep furrows.	Dark gray with deep furrows of irregular shapes.

Evergreen Oaks: Leaves

Interior live oak	Canyon live oak	California scrub oak
		
<p>Variable, 1"-3.5". Thick, leathery, elliptical, with smooth or toothed margins, often with short spikes; front dark green, shiny; back yellowish green, shiny.</p>	<p>Up to 2.5". Thick, leathery; smooth margin on mature parts of the tree, spiny teeth on young twigs; front dark green; back grayish with golden hairs.</p>	<p>Up to 1"; thick, stiff; smooth or toothed; often spiny; front dark green, back grayish green and hairy.</p>

Evergreen Oaks: Acorns

Interior live oak	Canyon live oak	California scrub oak
		
<p>Acorn Up to 1.5", narrow, conical, pointed.</p> <p>Cup Very deep, with thin, overlapping scales.</p>	<p>Acorn Up to 2", broad-based, egg-shaped.</p> <p>Cup Shallow, beret-shaped, very thick, with flat knobs and yellowish hairs.</p>	<p>Acorn Up to 1", egg-shaped.</p> <p>Cup Thick, bowl-shaped, with warty knobs in a "crocheted" pattern.</p>

	<p>The "BONUS OAK" Off-spring of very different "parents"</p> <p>The <i>oracle oak</i> is a <i>hybrid</i> between the deciduous black oak and the evergreen interior live oak. The two "parents" are the most dissimilar of the whole group. The size and shape of both the leaves and the acorns lie somewhere in between the two. The leaves change color but stay on the tree longer than the deciduous trees.</p>
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