



Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District

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Eucalyptus Management

Over the past decade, the Rancho Santa Fe Covenant has seen a drastic decline in the Eucalyptus forests health. These trees once defined the character of the Ranch in such a way that they are still the centerpiece of many logos within the community. The Fire District has evaluated this issue in depth and is dedicated to restoring the Eucalyptus tree forest while reducing the community's risk from wildfire. However, we cannot do this without assistance from the residents.

This letter is to inform you about the infestation of the red gum lerp psyllid (*Glycaspis brimblecombei*), located on most red gum eucalyptus trees (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) throughout Rancho Santa Fe. The psyllid is a sap-sucking insect first introduced to Los Angeles County back in 1988 from Australia. It has spread throughout much of California and has currently infested over two dozen *Eucalyptus* species, mostly red gum eucalyptus.

As a defense mechanism, the eucalyptus trees defoliate themselves extensively, to prevent nutrient loss. However, this defoliation mechanism leaves the trees highly stressed because it affects their ability to properly photosynthesize. This combination leaves the eucalyptus trees more susceptible to other insect invasions and diseases. The chance of most trees coming back and being lush again is minimal.

This continuous cycle of getting attacked by the psyllid, defoliating, and competing for limited resources with other trees has decreased the aesthetics of Rancho Santa Fe and increased the fire danger. Over time, these diseased trees have not regained their dense, mature canopies like we had hoped and have been left looking bare.

There is currently no reasonable cure for the red gum lerp psyllid. However, the following best management practices should be implemented within 100 feet of a structure and within 20 feet of a roadway:

- Remove all obvious dead eucalyptus trees.
- Thin out by removing diseased eucalyptus trees that are established but have minimal or non-existent mature canopies.
- Thin out by removing eucalyptus saplings in understory that are infested with the psyllid.
- Thin out vegetation in understory that act as ladder fuels and compete with eucalyptus for nutrients.
- Do **NOT** fertilize eucalyptus trees because it stimulates psyllid growth.
- Deep soak those larger more mature eucalyptus trees that have a dense green canopy and are healthy.

If you received this letter, the Fire District believes you have some diseased and dying eucalyptus trees on your property that could benefit from best management practices. If you have any questions regarding this material or would like a site visit to examine the health of your eucalyptus trees, please feel free to contact the Fire Prevention Bureau at weedabatement@rsf-fire.org.



Figure 1. Red gum lerp psyllid infesting red gum eucalyptus foliage in Rancho Santa Fe.



Figure 2. Diseased eucalyptus trees that have defoliated and should be removed in Rancho Santa Fe.



Figure 3. Healthy eucalyptus trees with minimal competition in understory in Rancho Santa Fe.