

Stockton CALIFORNIA

A high-tech urban forest

"Every city in the San Joaquin Valley depends on trees," arborist Scott Essin told us. "Shade trees can take 20° off the temperature on a hot summer day."

Essin is right (at least if you compare the temperatures of shaded and unshaded surfaces). That's one reason his city, Stockton, takes its shade trees so seriously: They help cool down the San Joaquin Valley's famously hot summers.

Stockton began a concerted municipal tree-planting program in the 1920s. Today, the city lists each of its 100,000 trees in a database

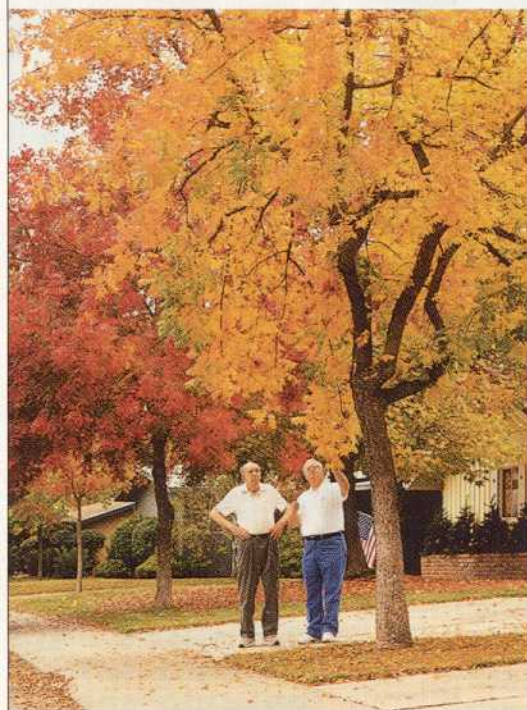
whose individual entries look something like medical records, cataloging everything from planting and pruning dates to calls for maintenance. You can see the result when you drive through town: Even modest neighborhoods look gracious when large shade trees line the sidewalks.

For such a tree program to be successful, city government has to be committed for decades, and zealously protect its budget for maintenance and replacement. (Stockton plants about 2,500 new trees per year.) That can be tough, since city administrators know cuts to the green budget are rarely noticed in the short term.

But Stockton has persevered. Its commitment has paid off in a city filled with magnificent Chinese pistache, valley oak, and Modesto ash trees. Along with some 70 other species, they bear witness to the power of planning and patience. See for yourself by driving or bicycling Stockton's finest tree-lined streets any time after the first of April, when deciduous trees unfurl their leaves.

Stockton is preparing a street/tree map; pick one up weekdays at the Parks and Recreation Department: 6 Lindsay St.; (209) 937-8206.

—Jim McCausland



Arborist and resident monitor Stockton's pride—trees, like this Chinese pistache.

MORE WINNERS

Sacramento. The Sacramento Tree Foundation (www.sactree.com) has planted a million trees in the last decade—and has plans to plant more. **El Segundo, California.** Thirteen Brownie Girl Scouts planted a tree in this Los Angeles suburb back in 1987. That good deed sprouted into the Tree Musketeers (www.treemusketeers.org).

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