Agenda Item: **V-B**
May 5, 2026

CITY OF

NEWPORT BEACH

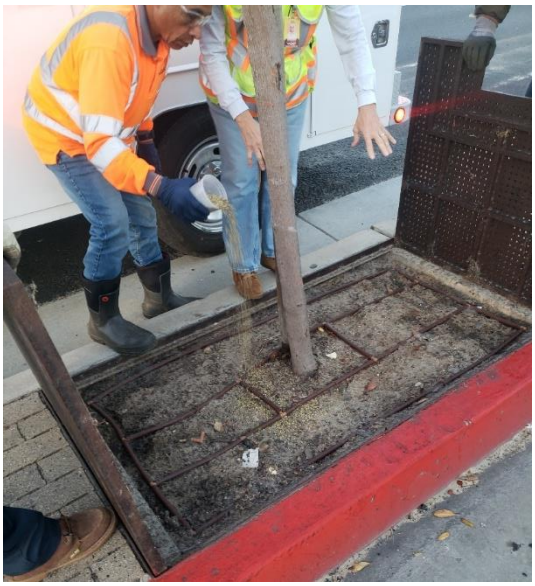
Municipal Operations Department Monthly Activities Report

To: Parks, Beaches & Recreation Commission

From: Municipal Operations Department

John Salazar, Acting Deputy Director

Tree Health Improvement Program Along Balboa Boulevard



Following the 2023 median renovation on Balboa Boulevard (from 20th Street to Island Avenue), the 98 newly planted strawberry trees struggled to adapt. A comprehensive investigation by the City's Plant Health Care contractor revealed that the sandy soil was preventing the trees from retaining adequate moisture.

The original irrigation system failed to provide enough water volume across the root balls, leading to dehydration. To resolve this, the City's landscape contractor reconfigured the irrigation in all tree wells to deliver water over a wider area, encouraging vital root expansion.

Additionally, soil reports identified the sandy ground as largely sterile. To combat this, the City applied soil amendments, micronutrient injections, and mulch to enrich the soil and prevent rapid evaporation. These improvements are designed to bolster the trees' health, enabling them to naturally resist annual aphid infestations, while also ensuring steady growth and vibrant, green leaves.

New Pest Alert: South American Palm Weevil

A new pest has been spotted in Orange County in the last several months, the South American Palm Weevil (*Rhynchophorus palmarum*). This invasive pest has been known to be present in San Diego County since 2013 and has caused the demise of many palms since then.

The South American Palm Weevil (SAPW) prefers Canary Island Palms (*Phoenix canariensis*) but is known to establish itself in other palm species.

Previous experience in San Diego has shown that this is a significant threat to highly valuable Canary Island Palms, and with the weevils' destructive habits and rapid spread, the SAPW can quickly decimate a palm within 60 days.

The SAPW's lifecycle consists of four main stages: egg, larva, pupa, and adult. Adult females lay eggs in cracks, wounds, or crevices of the palm tree. Once hatched, larvae burrow into the tree's trunk and crown, feeding on soft tissues.

Larvae pupate inside a cocoon made of fibrous palm material, eventually emerging as adults. The entire lifecycle spans approximately 60 days under ideal conditions, enabling rapid population growth in warm climates. Adult weevils can live for several months and travel great distances, spreading infestations to nearby palms.

The SAPW is notorious for its capacity to cause extensive damage to palm trees. Larvae feeding on the internal tissues disrupt the tree's ability to transport nutrients and water, leading to wilting, frond loss, and eventual tree death. In commercial and residential landscapes, this can result in significant financial losses, particularly in areas where palms are integral to aesthetic value. More worrisome is that without proper monitoring and removal of suspected palms, potential personal or property damage can occur when the top of the palm dislodges and tumbles to the ground.

Furthermore, SAPW infestations often introduce lethal red-ring disease, caused by the nematode, *Bursaphelenchus cocophilus*. This deadly disease exacerbates damage and accelerates tree decline.

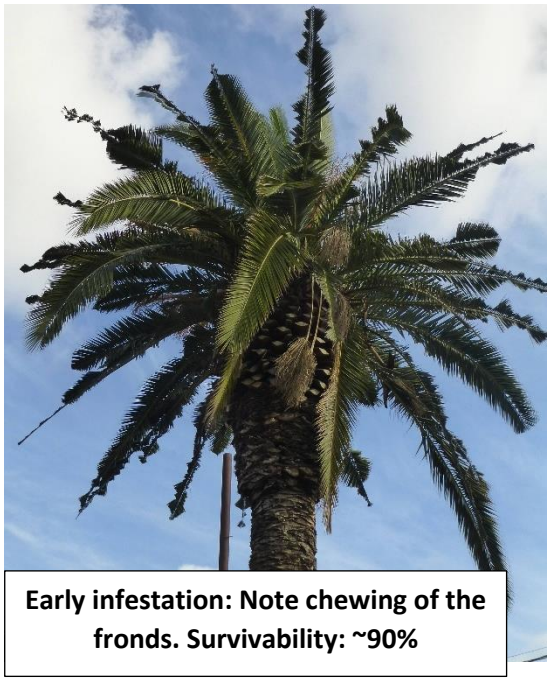
Thankfully, the weevil has confined itself to San Diego County for the past 13 years, thus enabling local jurisdictions to learn, prepare, form working groups to coordinate a defense against this pest. In 2024, the OC SAPW Working Group was formed from many jurisdictions including the City of Newport Beach to monitor the advance of this pest and form a defense. The City's Plant Health Care Contractor (West Coast Arborist) along with the Irvine Company (with their wide-spread land holdings) has been actively monitoring the weevil.

Latest reports have pegged major weevil activity immediately south of the city limits of San Clemente. However, a lone male weevil was collected in Irvine in August 2025, and two were collected in Mission Viejo in February 2026.

The City of Newport Beach is actively establishing defensive measures to prevent infestation and preserve our valuable, publicly owned Canary Island Date Palms within the City.

If caught early, the success rate to save a palm is upwards of 90%. However, if not quickly identified, success rate of survival quickly drops down to only 5%

City Staff are asking for the public's help in spotting and reporting suspected infected palm trees, either public or private palms.



Early infestation: Note chewing of the fronds. Survivability: ~90%

Later infestation: Note meristem decline. Survivability: ~5%

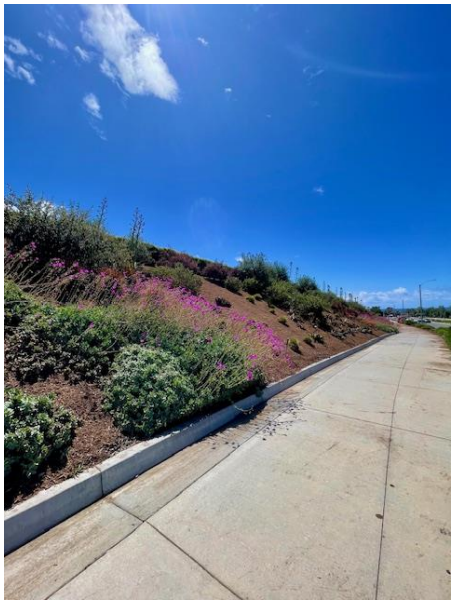
Greener Slopes, Smarter Savings: Blow-On Mulching Program

The Parks Division is leveling up the City's commitment to sustainability! We are currently applying 1,800 cubic yards of mulch to planters and slopes across the city to naturally suppress weeds and keep our soil hydrated. By using specialized "blower trucks," we are making our maintenance faster and more eco-friendly:

- Saving Water: This mulch layer acts as a blanket, retaining moisture and allowing us to reduce irrigation run times. The retained moisture also supports wildfire mitigation.

- Reducing Chemicals: A healthy mulch layer naturally blocks weeds, significantly cutting our need for synthetic herbicides.

- Maximum Efficiency: One truck can distribute 60 cubic yards of mulch in under three hours using a 400-foot hose. This allows us to reach steep slopes and large areas quickly, keeping our landscapes beautiful with far less manual labor.



Additionally, the Parks Division will be applying over 100 mulch wattles wrapped in biodegradable mesh to allow for slope retention and soil loss reduction in areas of concern.

Keep an eye out for our crews as we work to keep our city's green spaces healthy and resilient!

Chainsaw Safety

On Tuesday, April 7, the Municipal Operations Department, in conjunction with the City's tree trimming contractor Great Scott Tree Service, conducted a demonstration and hands-on training on chainsaws. Such tools are important during severe weather events, since downed branches and trees can block or impede roads or disrupt other critical services.

Some of the subjects covered during the demonstration and training included proper maintenance, safe starting and handling of the power tool as well as safe techniques in the use of the chainsaw in various situations. Most importantly, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was also discussed and demonstrated in how it prevents injuries and protects hearing.

Several employees had an opportunity to have hands-on training under the supervision of the experts provided by Great Scott. They gained valuable job knowledge and skills that are useful during emergency situations.

Important for this year was the hands-on demonstration of the new State-mandated electric chainsaws and how they differ in performance from the traditional gas-powered models.

The City of Newport Beach would like to thank the staff at Great Scott for providing the demonstration, the tools, and their time in helping our City Staff learn these important powered hand tools.

The City's Tree Trimming Contractor, Great Scott, demonstrates unique features of the electric trim saw

Trees Maintenance

During the month of March, Great Scott Tree Service (GSTS) trimmed trees in Grid 5 (Fashion Island), Grid 6 (Broadmoor), Grid 7 (Harbor View Hills), Grid 8 (Harbor View Hills South), Grid 12 (CDM), and Grid 13 (Irvine Terrace), and responded to seven tree-related emergencies, plus completed one service request.

Month of:	# of Trees Trimmed:	# of Trees Removed:	# of Trees Removed Because a Problem Tree:	# of Trees Planted:
March	2,867	26	0	18

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