



Monarch Environmental
Propagating Plant Propaganda
Since 2008

April 15, 2021
Volume 1, Issue 1

The Pollen Press

WELCOME!

Landscape is not decoration or the icing on the cake. It's the flavor of the cake, the very essence of what a community feels like. We instinctively crave the company of healthy plants and mature trees, lush hues and rich textures, fragrant blooms, humming insects, the crunch of leaves and the humidity of turf. This is the atmosphere that imprints in our memories of a time and a place, especially if that place is home.

So many people need to care to create and maintain a landscape, from designers and architects, horticulturists and arborists, to community leaders and residents. We battle budgets and deadlines, municipal restrictions, climate change, pests and diseases, not to mention endless aesthetic debates. And the truth is, we find the taste of a landscape challenge utterly irresistible.

It is my pleasure to introduce you to Monarch Environmental's inaugural quarterly newsletter, *The Pollen Press*. We would like to share our struggles and successes in the landscaping field, exploring solutions in arboriculture, horticulture, irrigation and resource management, overseeing outstanding community landscapes and pushing the industry forward. Join us in the field and let us show you why we love what we do.

Jen Wilson

Director of Horticulture

Editor in Chief



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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Check in with winter-stressed oaks
- Learn the story of Monarch Environmental
- Why water management?
- Meet the largest single flower native to California
- Real talk about protecting your urban forest





OAKS ON THE REBOUND

Monarch has been keeping a close eye on *Quercus* species (oaks) throughout our communities this season.

After a particularly dry winter, oaks have been exhibiting stress symptoms such as twig girdlers (a common pest) and fungal outbreaks like twig blight, anthracnose, and powdery mildew. Our team inspects general health and cultural conditions to help support at-risk populations.

To help trees recover, we have recommended additional water as well as adjustments to existing irrigation systems. Often, young trees will outgrow their original irrigation configuration and will periodically need updating anyway. It is also crucial to inspect while the water is running to ensure no overspray is directly hitting trunks, which could cause rot by fostering

potentially destructive pathogens.

From inspecting and testing the soil, we can confidently prescribe correct fertilizers and root stimulants. Over-applying these products can lead to an imbalance of salt in the soil, leading to that characteristic “burn” on leaves and even plant death, as well as polluted runoff. Using treatments wisely is part of responsible landscape management.

The bio-stimulants used on these oaks help to develop the soil microbiome (the ecosystem of microorganisms that create healthy soil).

So far, very few specimens will need replacement. Monitoring never stops but for now the critical period is wrapping up.

DIAGNOSTIC TOOLS

Lead Arborist Evin Lambert uses several diagnostic methods to assess the condition of ailing trees. In addition to experienced visual inspections, bark scrapings, and cultural inspections, Monarch utilizes lab testing of plant tissue and soil samples.

Evin’s tissue sample of a coast live oak, *Quercus agrifolia* (above) helps to diagnose issues for trees struggling in the area. The sample includes live material, declining material, and dead material for the most accurate representation of the tree’s current state.

Soil samples are also illuminating. Lab analysis shows specific nutrient levels and deficiencies, identifies soil-borne pathogens, and provides pH levels.

These tools together inform treatment methods and help track progress.



The Monarch buddy system: always bring a friend! Junior arborist Luna Lambert joins in for inspections.



Monarch carefully monitors progress of new growth. It can be difficult to assess through dead material but a photo record over the weeks and months comes in handy. Fresh, new growth is a welcome reward!



Monarch's first office in 2008. It doesn't matter where you start, just start.

THE MONARCH STORY

Eight years after graduating college, I found myself transitioning out of the landscape contracting world. It was July of 2008, my wife and I had two daughters under three years old and I had no job. My story is like other stories in that what ends up being the best thing for me and my family was never part of the plan. Prior to 2008, I had been running a landscape maintenance business in Orange County, California. My plan was to assume ownership of the company that I had worked so hard to grow. That plan was side-swiped when it became obvious that the company was not really for sale and I had a decision to make.

Enter Monarch. During my tenure in landscape contracting, I felt that there was a gap in the industry. People don't trust what they don't understand. The mechanic is an easy scapegoat for this example. I began to wonder if I could help illuminate and demystify the industry for the volunteers on homeowner's association boards and beyond. My second thought was, "It's 2008 and we are in the greatest recession since the great depression, will anybody pay for this?"

After receiving encouragement from my wife, family, and friends, I decided to take a chance and name her Monarch Environmental. August 1st, 2008 was my first day as a business owner. The next four years included me sweating in my garage over a MacBook and walking (and sometimes falling) down slopes. The journey has been nothing short of amazing. In 2012, I moved into a real office. In 2013, I hired my first employee. In 2017, we moved into our very own stand-alone workspace in Capistrano Beach. Today we have a dozen experts that make up the Monarch team.

The Monarch story is one that centers around people. I never would have taken the chance without the support of my wife and I wouldn't continue do the work without the team and clients I work with today. Dr. Suess said it best, "You're off to great places! Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting, so ... Get on your way!"

The journey continues.

Matt Davenport

Chief Encouragement Officer



The early days! Matt and Heather embarking on the Monarch dream with oldest daughters Madison and Claire. We're all looking forward to these future interns...



The best support is family—so why not add some supporters? Since 2008, the Davenports have expanded with Ford (center), Brooks (right), and baby Wren.

WHERE TO START?

Irrigation inspections are professional evaluations of your landscape's water needs. Here's how Monarch begins your water management plan:

- ◇ Inspect soil profile for proper irrigation based on soil type and plant root depth
- ◇ Invoice review of irrigation parts with labor inspection
- ◇ Inspect components of irrigation systems to ensure that the equipment used is applying a uniform amount of water across each irrigation zone and is appropriate for the plant type and site conditions
- ◇ Advise and consult with landscape contractors, property managers and board of directors
- ◇ Attend board meetings to present findings and make recommendations



WHY WATER MANAGEMENT?

Did you know that on average, landscapes are over-watered by 30%?

Water management is so much more than programming your irrigation controllers once or twice a year. Water management incorporates critical factors of each site's unique landscape and monitors water usage and the plants and soils' response to the water they receive.

First, the site's existing irrigation system is assessed for how well it is performing. Factors such as age and how the system has been maintained need to be taken into account. A well-maintained system will apply water more uniformly and reliably than a system that has been sporadically maintained. Routine site visits that check for variations of water application and large leaks help maintain consistency of usage. Determining the type of irrigation for each zone allows a water manager to know how long a scheduled irrigation cycle needs to be programmed for.

Secondly, assessments of the site's plant palette and soil characteristics need to be thoroughly investigated. It is paramount to know the types of soils being irrigated to manage how much water can be applied during an irrigation cycle. Some sites have different soil profiles within itself, maybe due to grading of imported soils or for bioswales, and these soil variations can affect how individual hydro-

zones are irrigated. Plant palettes affect the amount of time required between irrigation cycles. Understanding root depths in particular soil profiles is key in determining length of run time and amount of irrigation cycles required for optimal irrigation for that hydrozone.

Finally, we are ready to program the irrigation controllers. Taking all of the site conditions into account, a baseline programming of the site's controllers can be installed into the controllers. Based on the controller's capabilities, the base programming can be adjusted as the site responds to the base programming. Weather-based irrigation controllers can make daily adjustments whereas stand-alone controllers can have minor programming adjustments made weekly based off of site observations. Installed flow sensors can be monitored for leaks or when zones do not run, giving alerts to water leaks and under-irrigated areas.

When all of these factors come together, water management allows for the most conservative amount of water to be applied while giving the plants the optimum amount of water the plants need to survive and thrive in their environment. Water management takes a dynamic environment and allows for the landscape to stay healthy and happy all year long!

Andrew Chase

Resource Management Consultant

MEET ANDREW CHASE

Andrew oversees Irrigation and Water Management Services for Monarch Environmental. Andrew has worked in the irrigation industry since 1996. In addition to working in Northern and Southern California, he also worked extensively with drip systems in Arizona and Nevada.

He is a recipient in 2006 of Hunter Industries' Trailblazer Award. Hunter has a tradition of recognizing individuals who have made significant contributions to the irrigation industry. The Trailblazer Award is meant to showcase professionals whose innovation, leadership, and forward thinking not only benefit Hunter Industries, but also the irrigation industry as a whole. In addition to his accolades, Andrew is also an instructor in the Irrigation Association's IA University Program with emphasis in commercial irrigation training. Most importantly, Andrew is a hilarious and treasured member of the Monarch team.

MEET ALEECE LANGLOIS

CAPP Consultant Aleece is a native of Orange County, CA where she grew up playing sports, riding horses and hiking with her family. Aleece attended Cal Poly San Luis Obispo where she received her BS in Environmental Horticulture. After graduation, Aleece began her career as a landscape account manager, overseeing landscape maintenance crews as well as enhancement design and installation. Her eye for design and customer service paved the way for her to manage large HOAs and more than 20 employees for the largest landscape company in the world.

Aleece spent the next chapter of her career in the nursery industry. Aleece joined a wholesale nursery team in 2014 and spent the next six years developing a holistic understanding of plant production, plant health care and horticultural practices specific to sustainable plant choices. Aleece has more than 15 years of experience in the industry with a robust background in maintenance, construction, plant health care, design and customer service. Aleece came to Monarch in 2020 and provides clients and coworkers with horticultural insight, enthusiasm, and innovation.



Cultivating Collaboration is a Monarch core value that Aleece embraces with professional ease

OBITUARIES

This legacy *Ficus benjamina* at one of our communities waits until it's fully decorated to finally succumb to *Armillaria* (fungus) and high wind events. Total tree failures often have co-morbidities, making it difficult to precisely predict when tragedy will strike.

Even with the best care and oversight,

trees are living organisms that we can't always predict or control. An arborist assessing your tree for potential risks will guide you through the process and help you make long-term decisions about your trees.

This *Ficus* will be replaced with an oak, better suited to the site and just as grand.



Farewell, faithful friend. You went out in a blaze of glory.

TREE RISKS

What's in an Assessment?

- ◇ Determining targets and target zone for the tree or branches of concern
- ◇ Reviewing the site history and conditions, and species failure profile
- ◇ Analyzing data to determine the likelihood and consequences of failure, evaluate the degree of risk
- ◇ Develop mitigation options and estimate residual risk for each option
- ◇ Level 3 (advanced) assessments may include testing with a Resistograph or Sonic Tomograph, which are devices that help arborists detect the presence and extent of internal decay within a tree's trunk.



PLANT PROFILE

ROMNEYA COULTERI

AKA Coulter's Matilija poppy, fried-egg flower, CA tree poppy

Stats

- ◇ **HEIGHT** Reaches over 6-feet tall with an open, airy habit
- ◇ **WATER** Adapted for low water conditions and native soil and will often spread in favorable areas (great for punctuating slopes)
- ◇ **CARE** Only requires annual hard-pruning (late summer or fall)
- ◇ **BLOOM** Flowers late winter to summer before moving into dormancy, great for building in off-season interest

Features

- ◇ **Fragrant!** Blooms are sweetly scented and even make good cut flowers.
- ◇ This is the single largest flower native to California!
- ◇ Pollinator friendly; supports bees, caterpillars, butterflies and moths
- ◇ Deer resistant and does not appear to interest bunnies in maturity (keep an eye on young plants just in case)
- ◇ Suited for chapparral areas and looks great with other natives like *Arctostaphylos* (manzanita), *Ceanothus* (California lilac), and *Heteromeles* (toyon)

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Rooted in Relationships
◇
Cultivating Collaboration
◇
Growth with Purpose
◇



KEEP IN TOUCH

Mysteries in your landscape? Monarch is here to answer your questions. Reach out to us by phone or e-mail to discuss your needs, request a quote, or compliment this fantastic newsletter. Visit us on the web to explore our digital library with helpful PDFs designed to help educate your communities on pressing landscape topics.



Caption this photo for a chance to win a Monarch swag bag! Contact jen@monarchu.com