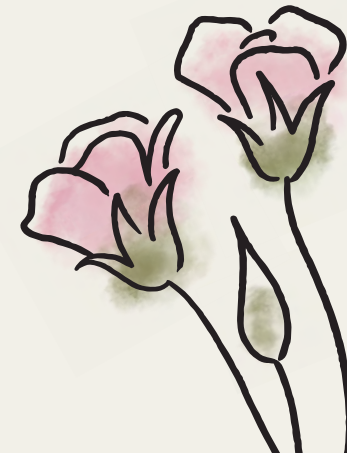


# History *in Bloom*



**TreePeople**





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For more than fifty years, TreePeople has shown what is possible when people come together to care for the places they call home.

What began with a teenager planting trees in the mountains above Los Angeles grew into a movement that has helped shape forests, neighborhoods, schools, watersheds, and ecosystems across Southern California. Along the way, TreePeople has remained what it has always been: a place where people gather, learn, and take action together.

Coldwater Canyon Park reflects that spirit of connection between people and nature. Once a working fire station site, it has become a living campus where ideas are tested, knowledge is shared, and solutions take root. From restoring forests to greening schoolyards, from capturing rainwater to planting trees in neighborhoods that need them most, TreePeople's work has always connected the wellbeing of people with the wellbeing of nature.

This exhibition offers a glimpse into that journey—the people, ideas, and moments that shaped TreePeople and helped grow a vision for a greener and healthier Southern California.

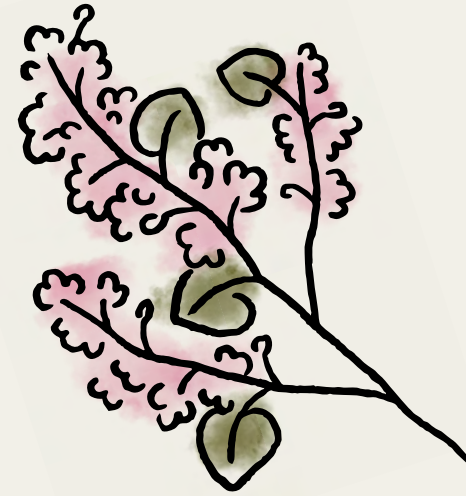
As you explore History in Bloom, we invite you to look back at where this work began—and to imagine what comes next.

The story of TreePeople is still unfolding. Because Trees Need People, and People Need Trees.

*We acknowledge that areas TreePeople manages and conserves are the ancestral homelands of the Tongva/Kizh, Chumash, and Tataviam people—the original stewards of this region. We honor their elders both past and present for their continued connection to and protection of one of the most beautiful and diverse landscapes in the world.*

## TreePeople restores the relationship between people and nature—from mountain forests to city streets and everywhere in between.





## The Inspiration of a Teenager

### *How one small act helped grow a movement.*

TreePeople began with a simple but powerful idea: that people can work together to heal the land.

In the early 1970s, fifteen-year-old Andy Lipkis was working as a counselor at a summer camp in the San Bernardino Mountains when he learned that smog drifting from Los Angeles was slowly killing the forest. Rather than accept the loss, he gathered fellow campers to help restore a small part of it—transforming an abandoned parking lot into a grove of newly planted trees.

That moment sparked something much larger. What started as a small volunteer effort soon grew into an organization dedicated to restoring forests, planting trees in cities, and helping people understand the deep connections between nature and daily life.

From its earliest days, TreePeople showed that when people come together around a shared purpose, even small actions—like planting a tree—can grow into lasting change.



A 1973 Los Angeles Times article about Andy's efforts—titled "Andy vs. the Bureaucratic Deadwood"—asked readers to help fund a tree-planting project in the San Bernardino National Forest. (1975)



10<sup>00</sup>

IONE MORRISON BARBER  
STANEY BRAE  
6867 APPERSON STREET  
TUJUNGA, CALIFORNIA 91042  
4-23/73

Dear Andy Kipkis:

Hurrah for the contribution you are making to the ecology. We read the Times account of your efforts with gratitude that we have young people like you who are ready to pitch in and do what they see needs doing.

As a 78-year-old retired librarian, I cannot help dig & plant, so enclosed is my contribution you can put to work.

No need to acknowledge it, as I am sure you have no time for that. Just get on with your planning. May the summer project work out well.

Ione Morrison Barber

And  
5-21-73

6<sup>th</sup> grade class  
% Cimobar Sch.  
286 Skillman Ln.  
Petaluma, Calif.  
94952

Dear Andy Kipkis,  
Hi, here are your friends, the  
6<sup>th</sup> grade class again.

Thank you very much for your  
letter. We really appreciated  
it.

Here is your ten dollars of class  
is sending you. (We took a vote  
to send you ten dollars instead of five.)

We wrote a letter to Col. Suber for  
you. But we also wrote a letter to  
General Hathaway, because he has  
bigger planes.

We would also like to know how  
are you going to get the trees

to Hamilton Air Force Base?  
Hamilton doesn't have any trucks.  
Do you think the National Guard unit  
in Santa Rosa might do this?

Your Friends,  
The 6<sup>th</sup> grade class.

P.S. We are sending you a self-addressed  
envelope for your use, if you need  
our help in any other way.

After the success of the first planting project, the California Conservation Project (later to become TreePeople) expanded the effort across more than twenty summer camps. Campers worked together to grow and plant trees, helping restore damaged forest areas in the San Bernardino Mountains. (1974)



Andy Lipkis in the San Bernardino National Forest. (1975)



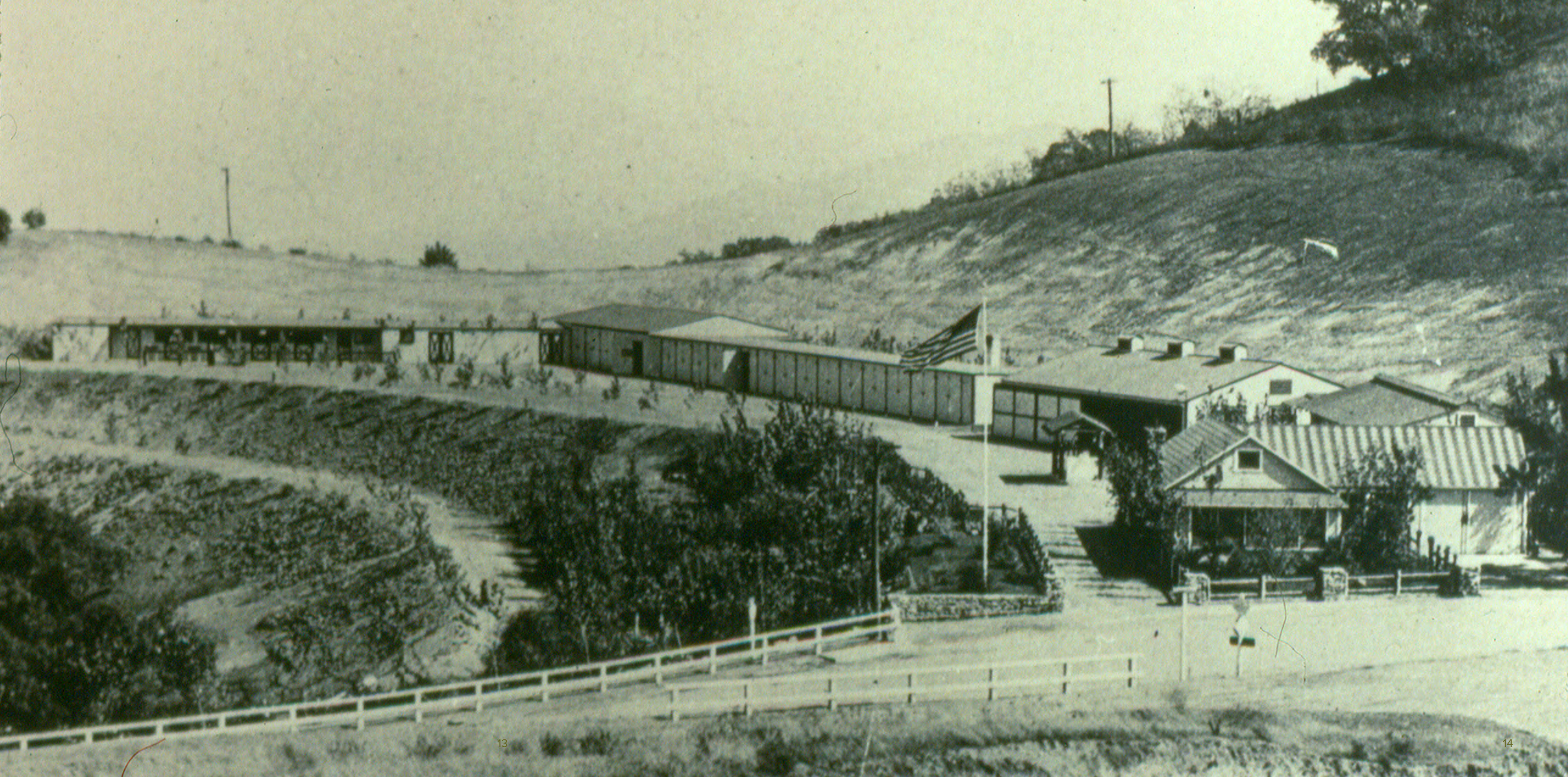
## Moving to Our Home at Coldwater Canyon Park

TreePeople began with a simple but powerful idea: that people can work together to heal the land.

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From its earliest days, TreePeople showed that when people come together around a shared purpose, even small actions—like planting a tree—can grow into lasting change.



Mountain Fire Station 108, located at what is now Coldwater Canyon Boulevard and Mulholland Drive. Originally built to serve firefighters protecting the surrounding hills, the station later became the site of TreePeople's home at Coldwater Canyon Park. (c. 1925)

The 45-acre site offered more than space for a nursery—it became a place where volunteers could grow seedlings, welcome school groups, and begin sharing TreePeople’s vision for reconnecting people with nature. (1975)



The City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks granted TreePeople permission to begin growing seedlings here—marking the start of Coldwater Canyon Park as a center for environmental learning and restoration. (c. 1976)



The Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO) donated a '50s vintage fuel truck that TreePeople converted into a water truck—helping volunteers care for young trees during planting projects. (1977)



TreePeople's first sign welcomes visitors to its new home at Coldwater Canyon Park. (c. 1978)

TreePeople establishes its headquarters at the former Mountain Fire Station site, now Coldwater Canyon Park. (1978)



Valley News photo

Lining up for their picture at transfer ceremonies of Mulholland Drive Fire station to City Department of Recreation and Parks from left are Andy Lipkis, Joel Wachs, Dolly Swift, John Lawson, Stanley M. Borden and Richard Lewis. The 10-acre site will be operated as a park.

## Mulholland fire station transferred

By Al Kelley

About ten acres of mountain property formerly occupied by Los Angeles City Fire Department Station 108 at junction of Coldwater Canyon Avenue and Mulholland Drive Wednesday were transferred officially to the Department of Recreation and Parks by the Fire Commission.

In impressive outdoor dedication ceremonies led by councilman Joel Wachs, the tract became Coldwater Canyon Park and will be operated by privately funded California Conservation Project as a

public park, arboretum and environmental instruction facility. CCP will operate the park on an interim permit cancelable in thirty days notice, officials stated.

Wachs referred to the transfer as a "significant step in preserving the unblemished beauty of the Santa Monica Mountains and a unique concept in the L.A. park system." He singled out for special praise Andy Lipkis, 23, director and founder of the California Conservation Project and thanked his staff for their ceaseless effort to make the park a reality.

Fire Department Commission president John Lawson turned over the key to the former fire station to commissioner Jill Swift, of Recreation and Parks. He, in turn, handed the key to Lipkis. Battalion Chief Stanley M. Borden, commander of Fire Department Division 3, gave a brief history of Station 108 which has been moved a short distance away to the former signal station on Mulholland Drive.

Lawson said, "We are not abandoning you residents in this area.

We have simply moved to the old signal station around the corner." Wachs said that the CCP had worked on the project and voiced his plans for public education and recreation at the facility.

Wachs planted a California redwood tree and handed out a truckload of pine tree seedlings grown on the site by the CCP under Lipkis supervision. Refreshments were served by volunteers of the Department of Recreation and Parks. Paul and Hunter Sheldon of CCP coordinated arrangements.



Coldwater Canyon Park soon became a place for TreePeople's earliest environmental education displays. (c. 1979)



## Education at the Heart of Our Work

Helping people understand the natural systems that sustain life in our city has always been central to TreePeople's mission.

Early Eco-Tours along the trails of Coldwater Canyon Park invited children, families and the community to explore the natural systems that shape Southern California—forests, soil, water, and wildlife. Over time, these experiences grew into immersive environmental education programs that combine hands-on learning, interactive exhibits, and opportunities to care for the land directly.

From planting seeds to exploring how water moves through a watershed, these programs help young people understand how their actions shape the health of the places they live.

Since those early days, TreePeople has guided hundreds of thousands of students through outdoor learning experiences that inspire curiosity, stewardship, and a lifelong connection to nature.





TreePeople hosted a summer camp, Little Tree House, which ran from 1978-1981. (1978)

Andy Lipkis teaching visitors about the importance of trees and the role they play in healthy ecosystems. These early Eco-Tours brought school groups and families into the park to experience nature firsthand—exploring trails, planting seeds, and learning how forests and watersheds work together. (c. 1978)



# SUNDIAL FEATURES



TRAILING OFF — Children join Tree People volunteers on a nature trail to see organic and herb gardens and to learn to pot trees. (Sundial photo by Lisa Mastroff)

## Tree People help to beautify world

By LISA MASTROFF

Tree People are people who live in trees. Or are they people who climb trees? Actually, Tree People are people who, through environmental education and community participation, seek to instill in others an ethic of respect and responsibility for the world we live in.

"Our main message is to get people to think globally and act locally," John Earl, Tree People volunteer coordinator, said. "It's not crazy to say that if people changed here they could change the world."

**"Our main message is to get people to think globally and act locally."**  
— Earl

Earl has been with Tree People (also known as the California Conservation Project) since it began operations in 1976 at its present location at Coldwater Canyon Park on Mulholland Drive. But the Tree People organization actually began in 1973 with the realization of conservation-minded Andy Lipkis's dream.

A summer camp naturalist told Lipkis that Los Angeles smog was killing off trees in the San Bernardino mountains. In 25 years, the naturalist said, smog will have killed most of the trees, and nothing will be left but barren hills.

Forest Service researchers identified several "smog-tolerant" native tree species and said the forests could be saved if a major smog-tolerant tree planting program could be put into effect. The seed had been planted for the idea for the Tree People and it

wasn't long before it began to flourish.

"We currently have 1,500 paying members involved in the Tree People," Earl said. "And now our focus is not only on tree planting, but on environmental education."

The environmental education program is designed to "develop values and awareness concerning our environment," Chris Reiseck, CSUN recreation major, said.

Reiseck began an internship with the Tree People this semester and has been concentrating on the environmental education aspect of the organization.

Eco-tours are scheduled three days a week specifically for school children, Reiseck said. "We take the children on nature trails, show them the organic and herb garden and then have a tree-potting session," she said.

"It's a great experience for the children to plant the trees," Earl said. "They know that they are contributing to the world and making it better."

Jeff Stein, another CSUN student, is working on his master's degree in outdoor natural resources while coordinating the tree nursery program and

**"It's not crazy to say that if people changed here they could change the world."**  
— Earl

managing the park as a Tree People member.

"I began working for the Tree People as a volunteer because it gave me units of credit toward my independent study," Stein said. After his initial involvement with

Please turn to page 12



## Volunteers plant seeds for fresh beginnings

Continued from page 11

the program two years ago, Stein decided the organization was something he would like to contribute more to.

This dedication and eye toward the future is what gives the Tree People its strength and purpose. All-out major tree planting projects are always in the making, Earl said.

Because the Tree People is a private, non-profit organization, it must rely on donations and state grants to provide its funds. Fund-raising projects are always a good idea.

"We'll be having our third annual 10 kilometer Tree Run on the Marina Freeway on March 8," Earl said. Five thousand people participated in the first Tree Run and 70 pine trees were planted

along a previously unlandscaped stretch of the freeway.

"Everyone who runs pays a \$6 fee and gets a baby tree and a T-shirt," Earl said. "And we'll probably be planting some more trees along the freeway this year too."

Tree planting is a major function of the Tree People, along with environmental education, but the organization also wants to educate people about solar energy, give them energy saving ideas and "teach them how to do more for themselves," Earl said.

"Our project theme is to let people know problems exist and then show them how to do something about it," Earl said. "Little changes in lifestyle can make such a difference."



Planting seeds and trees has long been a hands-on part of the Eco-Tour experience. (c. 1981)



Students discovering nature along the trails of Coldwater Canyon Park during an early Eco-Tour. (c. 1986)

The “Compost Gourmet” demonstrated how food scraps and plant material can be transformed into nutrient-rich compost—showing how natural cycles help regenerate soil. (1993)





Interactive exhibits helped visitors understand the hidden systems beneath their feet. In the “Dirt Factory,” participants explored how soil, mulch, and decomposing leaves work together to create healthy ecosystems. (c. 1995)

Demonstrations illustrated how water flows from the mountains through the city and eventually to the ocean—revealing how forests, soil, and urban landscapes are connected. (c. 1995)



Demonstrations illustrated how water flows from the mountains through the city and eventually to the ocean—revealing how forests, soil, and urban landscapes are connected (c. 1995)

The “Dirt Doctor” helped visitors understand how mulch protects soil, conserves water, and supports healthy plant growth. (2016)



Students on an Eco-Tour learning about the natural cycles that shape their city. (2023)

In 1997, TreePeople developed the Generation Earth program for Los Angeles County Public Works, empowering middle- and high-school students to take action through environmental service-learning projects. The program continues today, helping young people care for their communities and the environment. (2023)





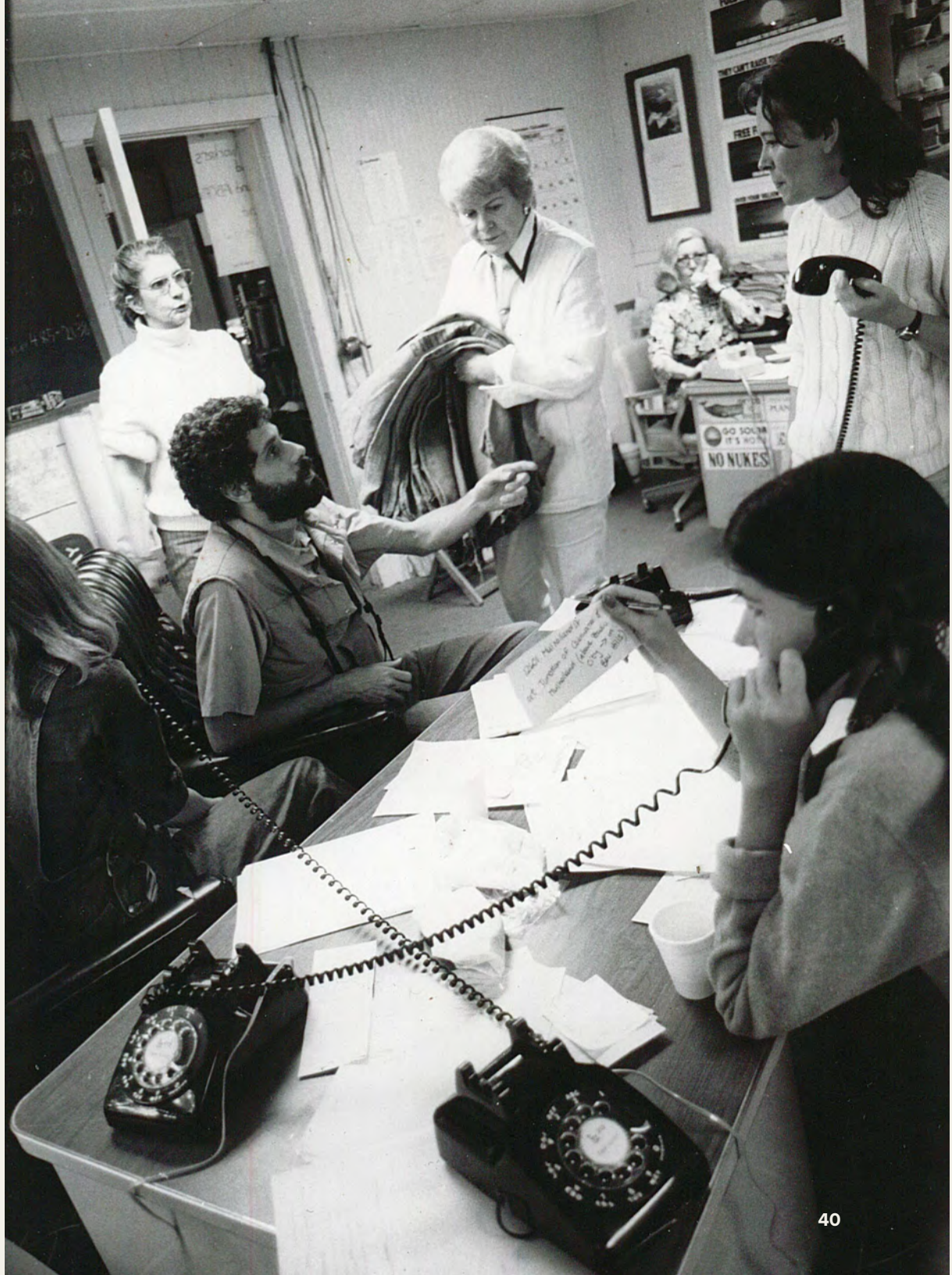
## Responding Together: A Call to Action

Severe storms and flooding in Los Angeles provided TreePeople with its first experience mobilizing volunteers for disaster relief. Community members came together to clear debris, protect homes, and support neighbors in need.

These early efforts revealed something powerful: caring for the environment and caring for one another are deeply connected.



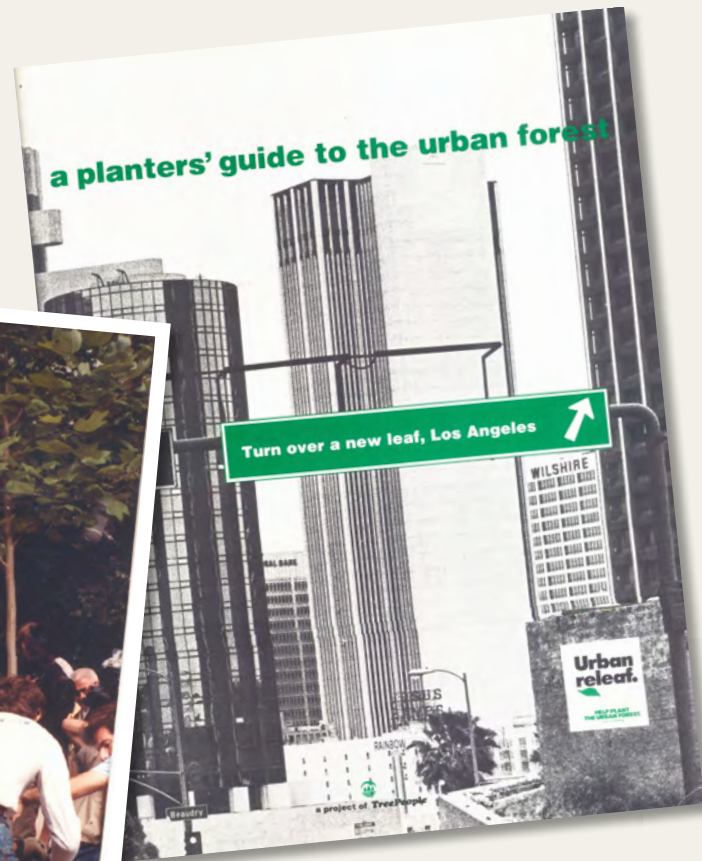
Volunteers loading sandbags to help protect homes from flooding. (1978)



During these emergency responses, Coldwater Canyon Park served as an Emergency Resource Center for Los Angeles. Volunteers gathered here to organize supplies, coordinate relief efforts, and support communities affected by flooding. (1978)



As TreePeople's volunteer work gained attention, Andy Lipkis appeared on *The Tonight Show*. Host Johnny Carson made a personal contribution to replace shovels lost during disaster relief efforts. The moment highlighted the growing national attention around TreePeople's volunteer movement. (1980)



## A Million Trees

### *A city-wide movement.*

At every stage of its history, TreePeople has found strength in community.

From large-scale volunteer plantings to creative public events and community celebrations, the organization has always found ways to bring people together around a shared purpose—caring for the places we live.

One of the most ambitious efforts came with the Million Tree Campaign, which mobilized thousands of Angelenos to plant trees across the region ahead of the 1984 Olympics. This was in response to the City of LA Planning Department Air Quality Management Plan that called for the planting of a million trees to help comply with the air-quality standards of the 1970 Clean Air Act. What was expected to take decades was achieved in just three years—a powerful demonstration of collective action.

The campaign showed what TreePeople had believed from the beginning: when people act together, even the most ambitious goals become possible.





Students and volunteers helped pot up 10,000 donated Elderica pine seedlings for distribution across Los Angeles. The effort helped launch the Million Tree Campaign and inspired thousands of residents to plant trees in their own neighborhoods. (c. 1981)

Actor Gregory Peck joined the campaign as a spokesperson, helping bring national attention to TreePeople's goal of planting one million trees across Los Angeles. (1982)



A giant map at TreePeople headquarters tracked where trees were planted across the city. Residents were invited to register their trees, turning the campaign into a shared community effort. The millionth tree was planted 4 days before the 1984 Olympics. (1984)



Bus signs, billboards, and public service announcements invited Angelenos to plant trees and register them as part of the Million Tree Campaign. The effort turned tree planting into a city-wide movement. (1981-1984)



## A Living Memorial

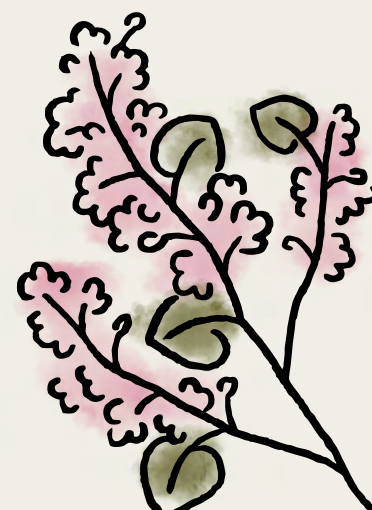
### ***Trees honoring memory and community.***

In 1990, TreePeople organized the largest urban planting in its history. Nearly 3,000 volunteers came together in a single day to plant almost 400 trees along a seven-mile stretch of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard in Los Angeles.

The idea began with TreePeople Citizen Forester Eudora Russell, who imagined transforming a barren boulevard into a living memorial. Her vision was simple: plant trees that would honor the legacy of Dr. King while bringing shade, beauty, and care to the surrounding community.

In the spirit of Dr. King's call to uplift and strengthen communities, the trees became symbols of shared responsibility reminders that caring for the land and caring for one another go hand in hand.

Together, neighbors and volunteers turned that vision into a lasting canopy—a tribute growing stronger with every passing year.



Canary Island Pines were selected for their resilience to urban conditions, including smog and fire. Like the communities they were planted in, the trees were chosen for their strength and ability to thrive. (1990)





Nearly 3,000 volunteers gathered to plant close to 400 trees along a seven-mile stretch of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard—TreePeople’s largest urban planting at the time. The effort demonstrated the extraordinary impact of collective action. (1990)



Each tree was dedicated in memory of someone and adopted by a nearby resident committed to caring for it. The project became a living memorial—sustained by the community that planted it. (1990)



Eudora Russell was a TreePeople Citizen Forester—a program that empowered community members to plan and implement tree-planting projects in their own neighborhoods. (1990)



Twenty years later, the trees planted that day had grown into a thriving canopy—a lasting reminder of what communities can create together. (2010)





# Community in Action

TreePeople has always blended environmental action with creativity, culture, and community life. Over the years, volunteers, staff, and supporters have brought the spirit of environmental stewardship into gatherings across Southern California.

From closing the Marina Freeway with 5,000 runners during the Tree Run to marching in the Pasadena Doo Dah Parade and West Hollywood's Pride Parade, TreePeople has met people where they are—inviting them to celebrate, connect, and care for the places we share.

These moments remind us that restoring nature can also be joyful, creative, and shared together.



Three years in a row, TreePeople temporarily closed the CA-90 Marina Freeway to host the Tree Run—a unique event that brought thousands of runners together to raise funds for urban forestry. (1979)



Runners gather at the start of the Marina Freeway Tree Run, an event that brought thousands together to support urban forestry. (1980)



Closing the freeway required special approval from Culver City, Los Angeles County, and the California State Legislature. This was a historic moment in California transportation history and a testament to the growing support for TreePeople's work. (1980)





TreePeople joined the whimsical Pasadena Doo Dah Parade, bringing environmental messages to the streets through humor and creativity. (c. 1982)

TreePeople—affectionately known as the “People of Tree”—helped bring environmental stewardship to the Renaissance Faire. (c. 1982)





TreePeople attendees spell out "TreePeople" during the Peace Sunday concert. (1982)



Events like the Green City Fair at Coldwater Canyon Park invited the public to explore sustainable living, environmental education, and community action. (2012)

TreePeople at the West Hollywood Pride Parade. (2023)



TreePeople's Monarch Mash event supported our project of planting more than 5,000 native milkweeds to help restore monarch butterfly habitat. (2025)



# Research in Practice

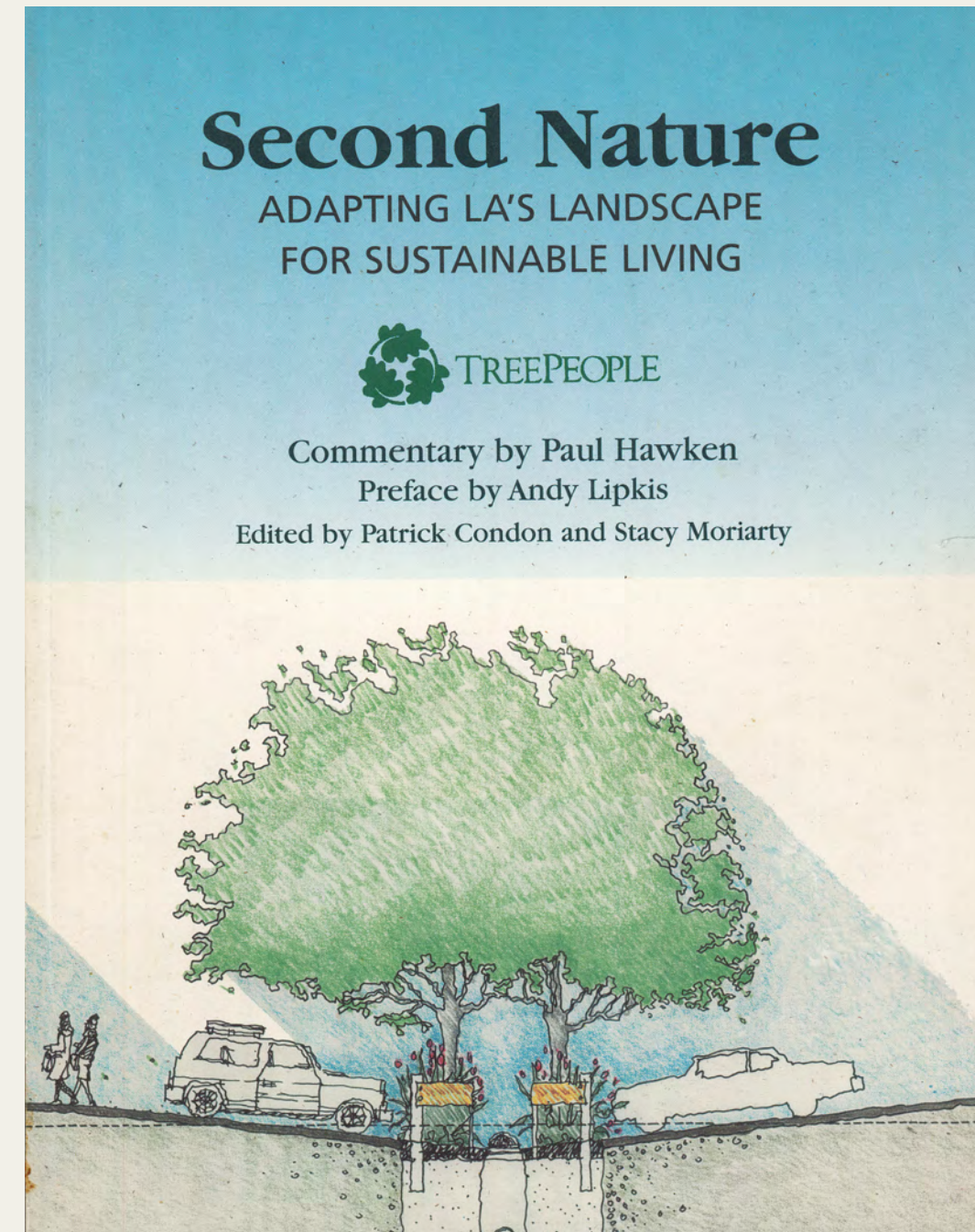
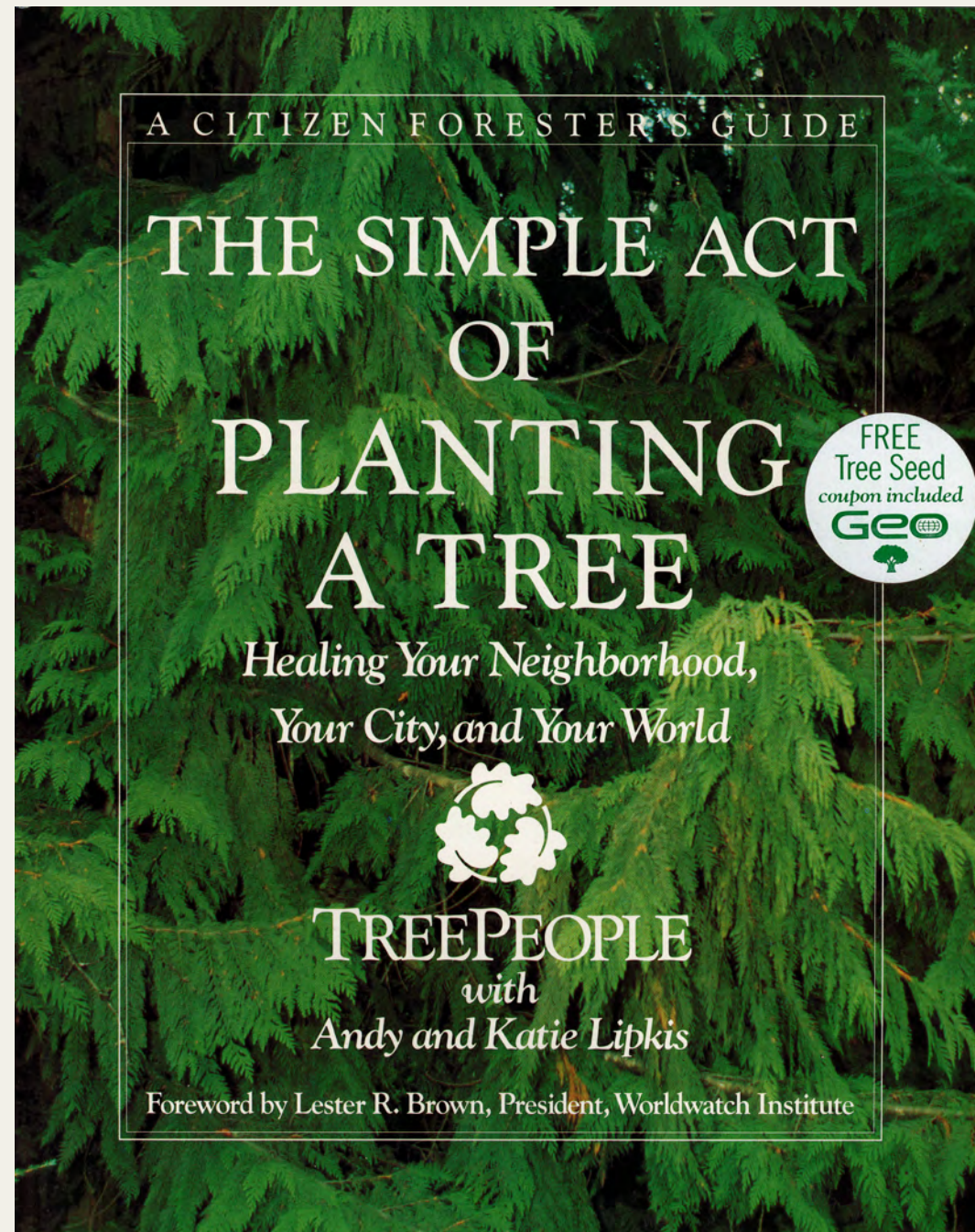
TreePeople’s work has always combined action with learning. Over the years, the organization has published research reports that help communities, public agencies, and practitioners understand how nature-based solutions can address challenges such as urban heat, stormwater management, soil health, and community well-being.

Many of these studies grow out of partnerships among scientists, community organizations, and public agencies. By combining research with hands-on experience in forests, neighborhoods, and schoolyards, TreePeople helps turn ideas into practical solutions that can be used across Southern California.

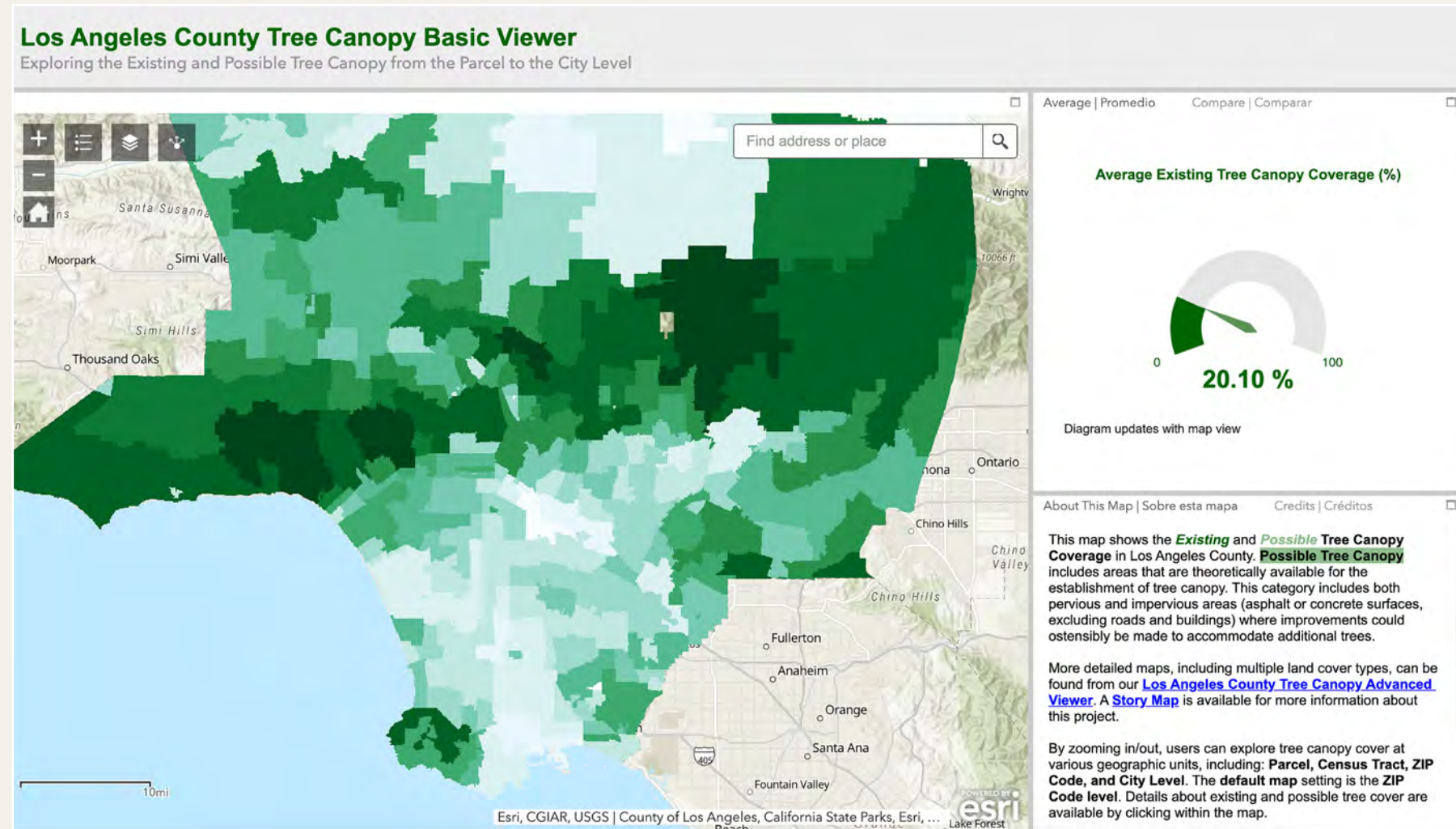
Through studies on urban soils, tree canopy, stormwater capture, and greener schoolyards, TreePeople’s shows how cities can function more like healthy ecosystems. Today, research continues across TreePeople’s programs—from the Research Department to Conservation teams and TreePeople Land Trust—bringing people together to study, test, and implement new approaches to restoring nature in our region.



*The Simple Act of Planting a Tree* was published as a Citizen Forester's Guide to share guidelines and lessons learned for others who want to plant trees in their community. (1990)



TreePeople published *Second Nature*, a guide to adapting Los Angeles landscapes for more sustainable living. The book grew from a 1997 design charrette that explored how homes and landscapes could function as small "micro-watersheds," capturing water and supporting healthier ecosystems. (1999)



TreePeople and Loyola Marymount University’s Center for Urban Resilience developed the Los Angeles County Tree Canopy Map Viewer. Using high-resolution mapping and remote sensing data, the tool helps identify priority areas where expanding tree canopy can improve neighborhood health and resilience. (2020)

TreePeople is studying two native conifer species—bigcone Douglas fir and gray pine—to support future forest restoration. Working with the California Botanic Garden and Angeles National Forest, the project helps guide reforestation in a changing climate. (2021)





TreePeople partnered with the California Botanic Garden and U.S. Forest Service to reintroduce the federally endangered plant Nevin's barberry into the Angeles National Forest. Restoration sites in the Sierra Pelona Mountains are helping prevent the species' disappearance. (2022)

TreePeople's Dynamic Urban Soil Study examines how different types of ground cover affect soil health beneath our cities. The research helps identify practical ways communities can improve soil health and capture more stormwater. (2025)





## Enhancing Nature and Communities Across Our Region

For decades, TreePeople mobilized volunteers to plant trees, restore forests, and bring people together around the environment. Over time, that work grew into something larger: a regional approach to restoring the natural systems that support life in Southern California. When nature is healthy, communities are stronger.

What began with restoring forests in the mountains soon expanded into cities, neighborhoods, and schoolyards across Southern California. Along the way, TreePeople helped show how natural systems—trees, soil, water, and biodiversity—can work together to support healthier environments where people live.

From mountain forests to city streets, from schoolyards to urban watersheds, TreePeople's work reconnects people with nature and restores the living systems that sustain our region.

Together, these efforts form a single vision: communities where people and nature thrive side by side.





# Transforming Our Cities

While trees were needed in the mountains, it quickly became clear they were needed in the city as well.

TreePeople began working with neighborhoods across Los Angeles to bring trees, shade, and green spaces into urban communities. Through the Citizen Forester program (now known as the Community Forester program), residents learned how to organize plantings, care for trees, and lead greening efforts in their own neighborhoods.

These volunteer leaders helped transform streets, schoolyards, and parks throughout the region—creating shade, improving air quality, and building stronger connections between neighbors.

Many of the mature trees lining Los Angeles streets today began as seedlings planted by volunteers who believed in a greener future for Southern California.





Each year, hundreds of thousands of surplus fruit trees from California growers were burned after the selling season. TreePeople saw an opportunity to rescue these trees and give them new life in communities. (1984)

In 1986, TreePeople helped airlift 6,000 surplus fruit trees to Africa during a hunger crisis—demonstrating how environmental action could also support global humanitarian efforts. (1986)





Staff learning what it takes to do a variety of urban tree-planting projects on streets, in parking lots, and more. (c. 1983)

The first Citizen Forester planting took place as the result of working hand-in-hand with a Downtown Los Angeles community group. After the community raised funds, TreePeople led training on how to organize and lead urban tree-planting projects. (1986)





TreePeople hosts our first Citizen Forestry training, equipping residents with the knowledge and tools to organize their neighbors and take the lead on planting projects in their community. (1987)

More and more people become TreePeople Citizen Foresters. It becomes a nation-wide movement as TreePeople trains other organizations around the country. (c. 1998)





TreePeople led bare-root fruit tree plantings in housing projects and community centers. (1997)

Ventura Boulevard was closed down for a huge Citizen Forester planting. (c. 2004)





TreePeople transformed the schoolyard at Main Street Elementary, replacing asphalt with trees, gardens, and outdoor learning spaces. (2012)



In the first year alone, nearly 26,000 fruit trees were donated, pruned by volunteers, and distributed to families through food banks, churches, and schools. The program provided fresh food, shade, and beauty across Los Angeles. (2013)

TreePeople expanded its tree planting and distribution programs into the Inland Empire as part of a focused effort to bring trees and shade to communities that have historically had less access to urban canopy. (2021)



Each tree planted with TreePeople is welcomed with a name by the group who planted it, together saying: "Trees Need People, and People Need Trees!" As a part of our Calles Verdes project, TreePeople has planted over 900 trees in the City of San Fernando. (2023)

At Compton Elementary School, TreePeople removed asphalt to create space for shade trees and planted 21 trees with 65 volunteers. (2023)





TreePeople removed more than 14,000 square feet of asphalt and created this shaded garden at Pacoima Middle School. (2024)



TreePeople partnered with the City of Mead Valley to distribute 1,000 15-gallon fruit trees in one day. (2024)



TreePeople launches our tree-planting initiative in partnership with the South LA Eco-Lab. (2024)

In partnership with community organizations, TreePeople planted 12 memorial trees in Pacific Palisades to honor those who lost their lives in the January 2025 Los Angeles fires. (2026)





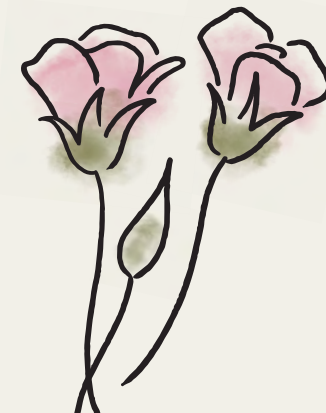
# Cindy Montañez

## *A Legacy of Environmental Leadership*

When Cindy Montañez became CEO of TreePeople in 2016, she brought a powerful vision: that access to trees, nature, and healthy environments should be available to every community, especially in communities that have historically had fewer trees and less access to nature.

A lifelong public servant and environmental champion, Cindy helped expand TreePeople's work across Southern California—especially in neighborhoods with historically low tree canopy. Under her leadership, community tree-planting programs grew to reach more than 15 regions, engaging thousands of volunteers each year to plant and care for trees that improve the health, shade, and beauty of their neighborhoods.

Cindy believed deeply in the power of people coming together to care for the places they call home. Her leadership helped grow TreePeople into a stronger regional movement for healthier, greener communities.





Former CEO Cindy Montañez installing native plants at Rudy Ortega Sr. Park in her hometown of San Fernando. (2021)

Cindy adding a tree stake at a Volunteer Supervisor training, a program that trains our stand-out volunteers to help us lead demonstrations and assist others with plantings and care. (2022)



Cindy Montañez speaking at TreePeople's Harvest Moon fundraiser. (2023)





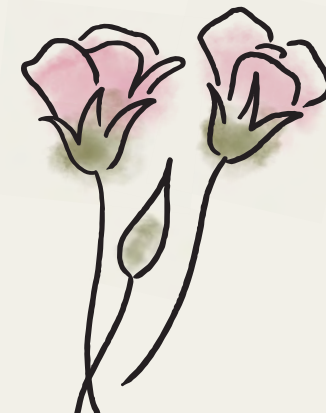
## Restoring Our Mountains

TreePeople's work began in the forests of Los Angeles' mountains.

The organization's first major project brought volunteers together to plant thousands of trees in the San Bernardino National Forest, helping restore areas damaged by smog. These early efforts established a model that continues today—people working side by side with public agencies, community groups, and volunteers to care for the region's forests.

Over the decades, TreePeople has supported restoration projects throughout the Angeles National Forest, the Santa Monica Mountains, and the San Bernardino Mountains, helping restore landscapes that protect watersheds, wildlife, and nearby communities. Today, TreePeople's Conservation team restores burned areas through fire mitigation, native plant restoration, and community-driven stewardship.

In 2019, TreePeople Land Trust (formerly Mountains Restoration Trust) joined the organization, helping steward more than 3,000 acres of protected land in the Santa Monica Mountains. The land trust includes 13 miles of public trails, active research sites, and one of California's most intact examples of the chaparral ecosystem.



Early mountain forest planting in the San Bernardino National Forest. (c. 1974)



Volunteers participating in early TreePeople mountain restoration efforts. (c. 1982)



Continuing a long tradition of planting trees and native plants in our local mountains. (c. 1990)

In partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, TreePeople launched Forest Aid to plant 35,000 seedlings and help restore the San Bernardino National Forest after the devastating 2003 and 2007 wildfires that burned 185,000 acres of forest. (2007)



Following the massive 2018 Woolsey Fire, TreePeople removed acres of invasive plants and planted 3,660 trees in the burn scar over four years. (2020)



TreePeople planted thousands of Coulter pines to restore the Shake Plantation in the Sierra Pelona Mountains after the 2003 Powerhouse and 2020 Lake fires. Volunteers and AmeriCorps members supported the restoration effort. (2022)

Volunteers remove brush along the Betty B. Dearing Trail to support habitat restoration and fire resilience near Coldwater Canyon Park. (2024)





After the 2013 Powerhouse Fire, invasive plants that increase fire risk overtook parts of San Francisquito Canyon. TreePeople removed the invasives and restored the area with native plants. Here, the site is shown during and after restoration (2017 & 2023)



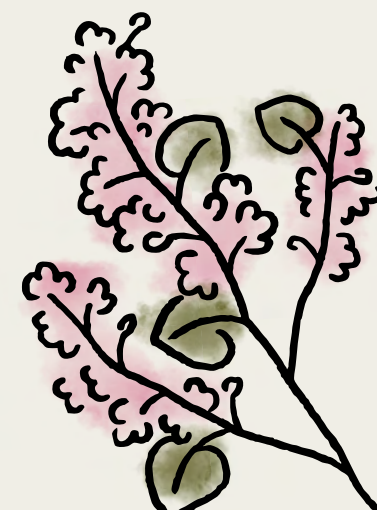
## Constructing the Park We Know Today

Coldwater Canyon Park has continued to evolve as a place for learning, collaboration, and environmental innovation.

Over the years, TreePeople has developed the park into a living demonstration site for sustainable design and nature-based solutions. The campus now includes educational gardens, outdoor classrooms, a native plant nursery, and spaces for community gatherings.

At the center of this campus is the Schuman Family Foundation Conference Center—a LEED Platinum building designed to work with the surrounding environment. Its architecture captures rainwater, maximizes natural light and ventilation, and demonstrates how thoughtful design can help cities function more like natural systems.

Together, these spaces make Coldwater Canyon Park a place where ideas grow—and where the work of building a greener Southern California continues to take root.organization, helping steward more than 3,000 acres of protected land in the Santa Monica Mountains. The land trust includes 13 miles of public trails, active research sites, and one of California's most intact examples of the chaparral ecosystem.



TreePeople staff gather for a “yurt raising” to create office space in an old orchard. (2003)



The Yurt Village becomes a unique workspace and gathering place for TreePeople staff. (2003)

The Yurt Village becomes a unique workspace and gathering place for TreePeople staff. (2003)



Actors Conservatory Ensemble performs a table reading of *Airplane!* at the S. Mark Taper Foundation Amphitheatre. (2019)



Beck performs at TreePeople's 50th anniversary concert. (2023)



TreePeople honors CEO Cindy Montañez with the planting of the Cindy Montañez Pollinator Garden at Coldwater Canyon Park. (2023)

The Grammy-nominated album *Saul Williams Meets Carlos Niño & Friends at TreePeople* is recorded in the S. Mark Taper Foundation Amphitheatre. (2025)





## The Schuman Family Foundation Conference Center

Completed in 2008, the Conference Center is one of Los Angeles' most sustainable buildings—a Platinum-certified LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) facility that demonstrates how thoughtful architecture can work in harmony with nature.

The building is carefully oriented to capture sunlight and prevailing winds, helping provide natural heating in winter and cooling in summer. Energy-efficient glazing welcomes daylight while reducing excess heat, and the angled roof captures rainwater and directs it into a 216,000-gallon underground cistern.

Many of the materials used throughout the building reflect a commitment to reuse and innovation, including reclaimed lumber from a historic park fire station, recycled steel, fly-ash concrete, and insulation made from recycled denim. Together, these elements make the Conference Center not only a meeting space, but a living example of sustainable design in action.

Today, the Conference Center continues to bring people together. Workshops, educational programs, community meetings, and cultural events create opportunities to share knowledge, spark ideas, and imagine new possibilities for a greener future.

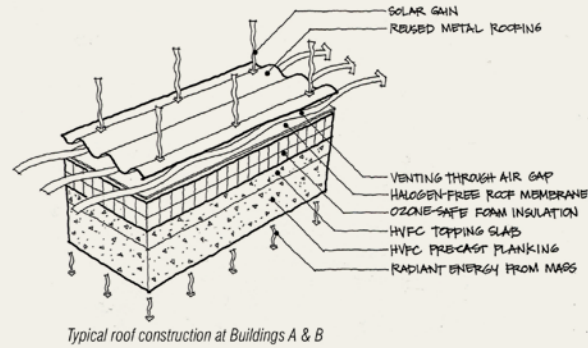
In this space, conversations turn into ideas—and ideas turn into action.

Because the story of TreePeople is still unfolding.





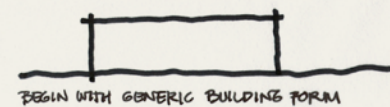
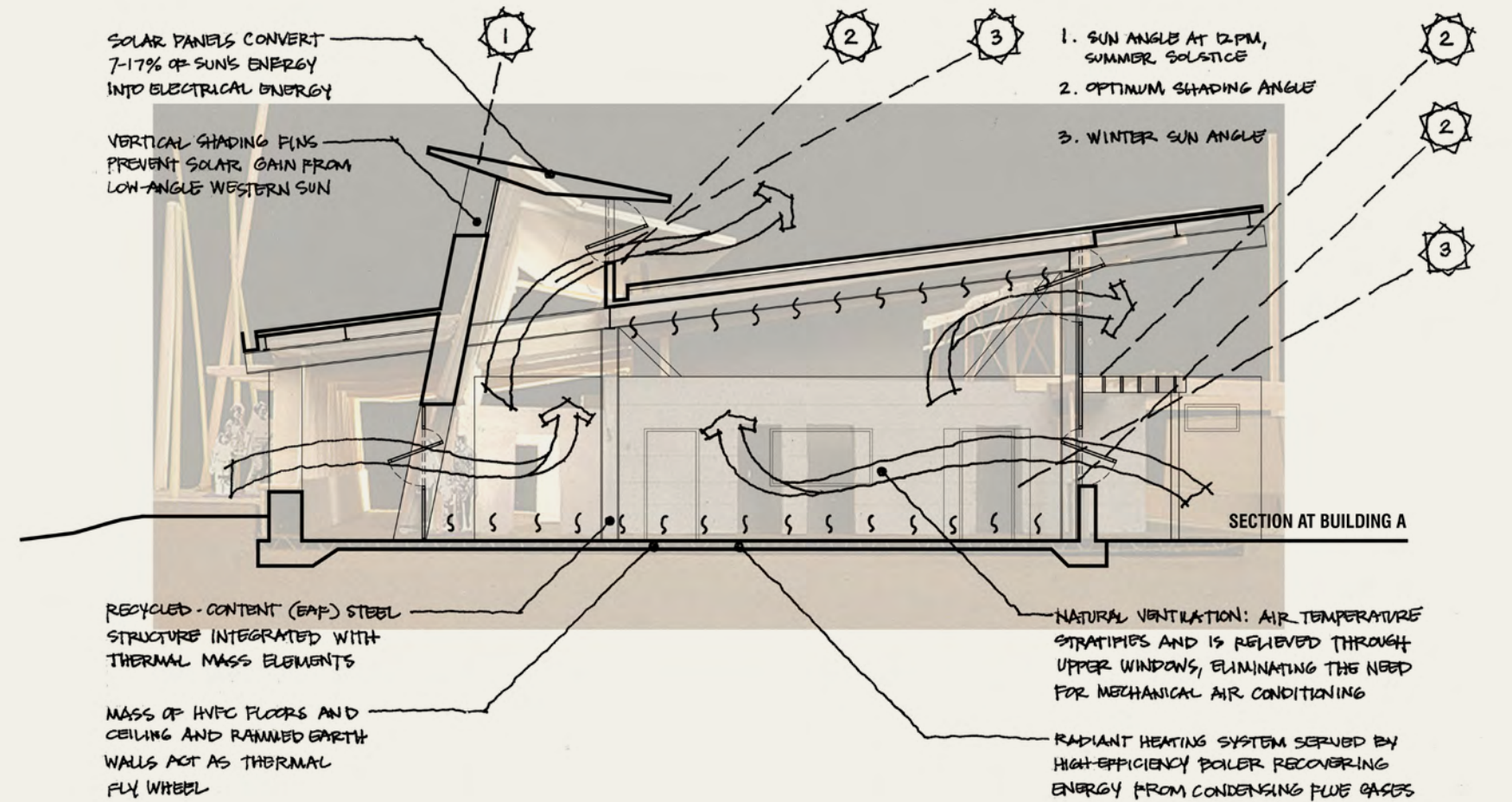
Interior view of Building A



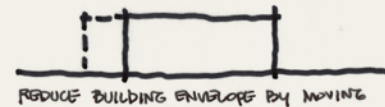
## REDISCOVERING NATURE



Adapting to climatic extremes: Compass termite mounds in Western Australia maintain a constant interior temperature within one degree of 88° F, while the outside temperature varies between 27° F and 108° F.



BEGIN WITH GENERIC BUILDING FORM



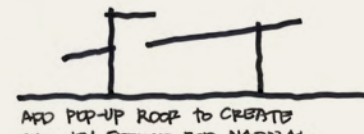
REDUCE BUILDING ENVELOPE BY MOVING CIRCULATION TO EXTERIOR



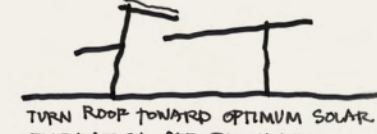
CHANGE ROOFLINE TO REDUCE SCALE AT COURTYARD AND INCREASE EXPOSURE TO SOUTH



ADD OVERHANGS FOR SHADING AND SHELTER



ADD POP-UP ROOF TO CREATE CHIMNEY EFFECT FOR NATURAL VENTILATION



TURN ROOF TOWARD OPTIMUM SOLAR ORIENTATION, ADD PHOTOVOLTAIC PANELS



DESIGN FENESTRATION FOR MAXIMUM NATURAL LIGHT AND VENTILATION



ADD VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL SHADING TO ELIMINATE UNWANTED SOLAR GAIN

Construction of the Schuman Family Foundation Conference Center and underground cistern (2004)



Actors Annette Bening and Ed Begley, Jr. join TreePeople to celebrate the opening of the redesigned environmental education campus at Coldwater Canyon Park, including the LEED Platinum Conference Center and underground cistern. Other features include the La Kretz Urban Watershed Demonstration Garden, The S. Mark Taper Foundation Environmental Learning Center, W. M. Keck Foundation Nursery, and Parking Grove. (2008)

TreePeople completes the Schuman Family Foundation Conference Center, a LEED Platinum building with a 216,000-gallon underground cistern that captures and stores rainwater that is used to water the native gardens and trees. (2008)





Generation Earth workshops bring teachers and students together to learn about environmental stewardship at TreePeople. (2012)



Grammy-winning ensemble Wild Up! hosts the Darkness Sounding festival at TreePeople with Living Earth. (2024)



Art exhibition by local artist Merissa Mann. (2025)



Author and inspirational speaker Simon Sinek hosts an art gallery fundraiser in the Conference Center. (2025)



## The Story of Our Water

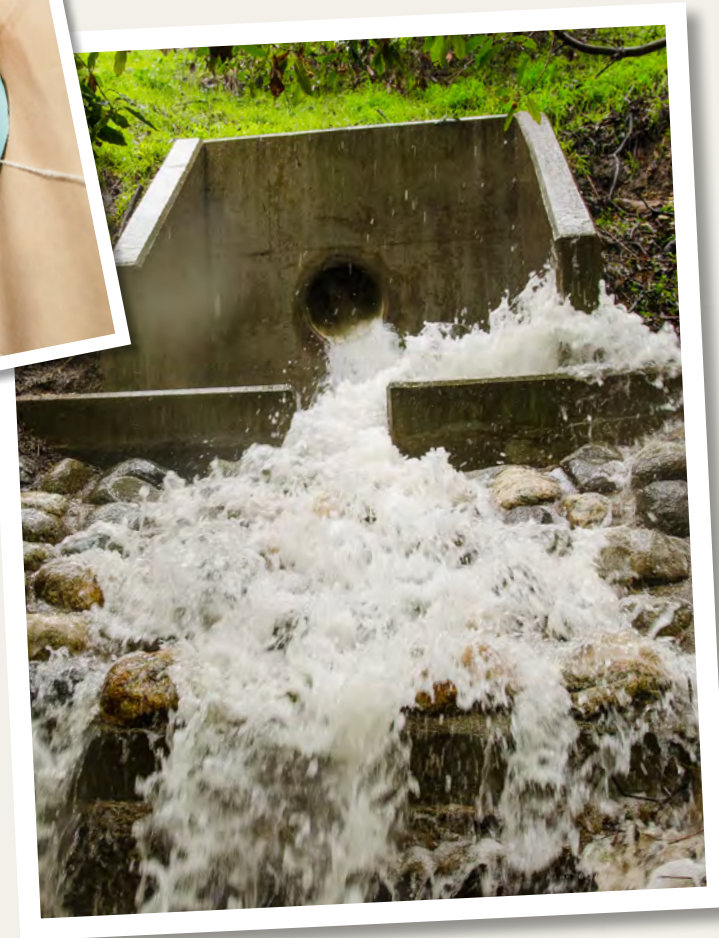
CAs TreePeople's work expanded, it began addressing another challenge facing Los Angeles: water.

By rethinking how cities handle rainfall, TreePeople helped pioneer solutions that capture, store, and reuse water where it falls—restoring the natural functions of urban watersheds. Demonstration projects showed how landscapes can function like natural watersheds—slowing stormwater, replenishing aquifers, and reducing flooding.

These ideas influenced projects across the region, including neighborhood retrofits and the development of the Sun Valley Watershed Management Plan, which helped transform one of Los Angeles' most flood-prone communities through green infrastructure.

With additions to the park like the La Kretz Urban Watershed Garden, we continue to demonstrate the importance of proper water management to thousands of students and adults each year.

Together, these efforts demonstrate how restoring natural systems can help cities become more resilient in the face of environmental change.





TreePeople retrofits the “Hall House” (home of Mrs. Rozella Hall) in South Central Los Angeles as a demonstration of water-smart landscaping. During a mock rainstorm using 4,000 gallons of water, media and city officials witness how the redesigned landscape captures and manages stormwater. (1998)

TreePeople retrofits Broadous Elementary School with a stormwater system that redirects runoff from surrounding streets to reduce flooding and recharge groundwater. (1999-2001)





Construction of the underground cistern that stores rainwater for the site. (2004)





The Elmer Avenue retrofit transformed a residential street into a model “green street,” capturing and filtering stormwater from a 40-acre area and helping reduce neighborhood flooding. (2009)

The La Kretz Urban Watershed Garden is an educational demonstration site that explores how water moves through natural and urban watersheds. (2008)



A miniature sewer pipe model demonstrates how water moves through urban systems. (2015)

Students explore the “Mountain Fountain” while learning how water moves through natural systems. (c. 2015)



Students explore the “Clean and Dirty Ocean,” learning how urban runoff can carry more pollution than water flowing through natural landscapes. (2019)

Students learn water-capture techniques in the La Kretz Urban Watershed Garden. (2019)



TreePeople co-coordinates the 2024 Summit for Equity and Resilience in Water and facilitated the Disadvantaged Community and Tribal Involvement (DACTI) Program, also known as WaterTalks, to engage 107 underserved communities across Los Angeles County in planning a more equitable and sustainable water future. (2024)





Groundbreaking for the Via Princessa Park project, which will create green space, expand tree canopy, capture stormwater, and provide community trails. TreePeople serves as the Santa Clara River Watershed Coordinator for LA County's Safe, Clean Water Program. (2026)



## Right Here, Right Now

More than fifty years after a teenager planted trees in the San Bernardino Mountains, TreePeople continues to grow and evolve.

Today, our work brings people together across Southern California to restore forests, plant and care for trees in neighborhoods, transform schoolyards, and rethink how cities work with water and nature.

Under the leadership of CEO Dr. Cassie Rauser, TreePeople is building on this legacy—expanding nature-based solutions that strengthen communities, restore ecosystems, and help our region thrive.

TreePeople remains a place where people gather to learn, imagine, and take action.

Because the story of TreePeople is still unfolding.

