HOLLYLEAF CHERRY

Prunus ilicifolia

Plants for Birds

This evergreen cherry species is native in coastal areas of California and Baja California. The leaves look a bit like holly, dark green and shiny on top with spiny margins. The fruit is a cherry, 12-25mm in diameter, and edible.

Birds love the fruit and use the tree to nest or hide within. It is useful for bank stabilization and is deer resistant.

This plant has long been used as an ornamental hedge. It is attractive to native bees, along with other insects. It is also called Islais Cherry, as Islais Creek in San Francisco was formerly lined with this tree.

photo © Noreen Weeden

BIODIVERSITY VALUE

HIGH: 140 likely California Lepidoptera host on this plant

BUTTERFLIES/MOTHS

Western Tiger Swallowtail, Pale Tiger Swallowtail, Elegant Sphinx Moth

BIRDS

Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Oak Titmouse, Song, White-crowned and Gold-crowned Sparrows, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Woodpeckers, Hooded Orioles, American Crows, California Scrub Jays, American Robin, Hermit and Swainson's Warblers, Nuthatches, Northern Mockingbirds, California Thrasher, Bewick's and House Wrens, Hutton's Vireos, and Cedar Waxwings

TYPE Tree

SIZE 30-49' tall / 20' wide

SUN Full sun, part shade

WATER Very low. Water 1 x month maximum once established

SOIL Tolerates variety of soils but best in coarse, fast draining fertile garden soil

WESTERN TIGER SWALLOWTAIL

CHESTNUT-BACKED CHICKADEE

OAK TITMOUSE

Learn more at: cnps-yerbabuena.org

2020 Golden Gate Audubon & Yerba Buena CNPS

Resources: Calscape, Doug Tallamy, Kathy Kramer Bringing Back the Natives, National Audubon

Photo credits: Noreen Weeden, Kristen Nelson, Jennifer Monsen, Sean Haight, Robb Hannawacker

California Native Plant Society

Golden Gate Audubon Society