

The next thing you will notice is the trulli, the small building in the center of the park. The Byzantine design of this landmark was brought to Italy from the Imperial palace in Constantinople. In the heel of Italy's boot these ornate structures are traditional small houses. The people who live near Putignano, Italy, still use trulli as country hideaways – or even as homes. The story is that dwellings were taxed on their roofs – so the people made roofs that they could easily take apart when the revenuers were coming.



This trulli was built by hand in the 1980s as a reminder of the mother country for the many Visalians whose roots trace back to Putignano, Visalia's sister city. In Putignano, there is a bar named Bar Visalia. Maybe we should send them a California bungalow.

Memorial Park is nicely planted with a hedge of Laurustinus (*Viburnum tinus*) along the north side, whose clusters of white flowers bloom in February.

The deep purple berries attract many birds and the dense foliage gives them safety, so these bushes are usually alive with warblers, finches, juncos, and sparrows. There are also many spiders living here; their webs are beautiful on a dewy February morning.

The trees in the park are small Valley Oaks and Golden Rain trees (*Koelreuteria*) with their clusters of three sided seed pods at the end of their branches. There are many of these trees around Visalia about this size because a city arborist in the 1980s liked them. On the west end of the park you will notice a nicely shaped Valley Oak with the typical long spidery branches that sometimes hang all the way to the ground.

Go out of the park and carefully cross Fairway to walk north along Mill Creek. In season, Mill Creek rushes through here, full of extra water from Kaweah Lake and runoff from city streets and fields to the east. You quickly enter the serenity of the Green Acres neighborhood, with large houses and big trees to match. These oft-pruned trees contrast with the ones along Mill Creek which are generally wild and interesting, full of snags and nature. Come here in the early morning and listen to the many owls – Screech, Barn, and Great Horned are common, or observe the hawks that hunt here every day. I have seen Red Tailed, Red-shouldered, and Sparrow Hawks. A few years ago a huge flock of Swainson's Hawks settled in these oak trees for a week or two on their way north.

Green Acres Drive

Silk Oak trees are often planted in yards, like the ones across from the end of Green Acres Drive. These Australian trees are not true oaks, but have dense

evergreen foliage and interesting compound leaves. This leaf configuration is unlike any native tree. They grow quickly and provide much shade, but Silk Oaks have some messy habits – they drop leaves and seeds year round, and drop large branches when the wind or a whim strikes them.

Turn west on Green Acres Drive and stroll along at the edge of the roadway. Willows are rare as yard trees in Visalia because of their need for water, but there is a good sized Weeping Willow in front of the house at 1914 Green Acres Drive 2.



Weeping Willows are native to China – they are featured in many Chinese Paintings – but have been planted all over the United States, especially near lakes and streams.

Two Redwoods

Across the street notice a pair of redwoods. The one in front, with many short flat needles, is a Coast Redwood

(*Sequoia sempervirens*), the species that grows the tallest of any tree on earth. The one behind, with scale-like leaves that barely stick out from the branchlets, is a Giant Sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*), the species that includes the General Sherman Tree and is native to our mountains at 6000–8000 ft. elevation.



Giant Sequoia



Coast Redwood