

Publication: Irvine World News;Date: Aug. 18, 2005;Section: Connections;Page: 27



## LENDING A GREEN THUMB

### Shadetree Partnership Nursery program offers a chance to help Irvine grow

By **SONYA SMITH IRVINE WORLD NEWS**

Individuals, groups and companies alike are working together to build the community's vegetation, one tree at a time.

Shadetree Partnership Nursery has a program called "Adopt-A-Row" which gives people the chance to volunteer their own time toward growing trees for Irvine. The program was started in the spring in the spirit of the adopt-a-highway programs.

The program allows individuals, groups and companies to adopt a row of either California oaks, sycamores or Monterey pines that require about six hours a week to maintain. The volunteers are given a tutorial from the nursery manager about how to care for the plants and then are left to water, fertilize, stake and maintain the trees.

"It's not brain surgery," says Tom Bonkowski, general manager of Shadetree. "If you've had a rough day, though, and you go out there and pick a few weeds, about 30 to 45 minutes later you are relieved of your pent-up feelings and frustrations."

So far the program has had several partners, such as the Braille Institute, Irvine Youth Action Team (middle school), Peter Montoya Inc., the Sobriety Through Education and Prevention Program and volunteer Robert Scrimger. Scrimger works as a chemist at Deft Inc. and through his company volunteered at several Shadetree events, eventually learning about the tree-care program — for which he now maintains two rows.

"You are in your own little world out there," Scrimger says of the nursery. But, "I'm gonna try my best not to kill them."

Scrimger usually spends about 20 hours a month working on his rows. Volunteers spend an average of six to 10 hours at the nursery.

His love for native plants and birds will soon be evident in the nursery as he integrates some live coastal oak into his second row.

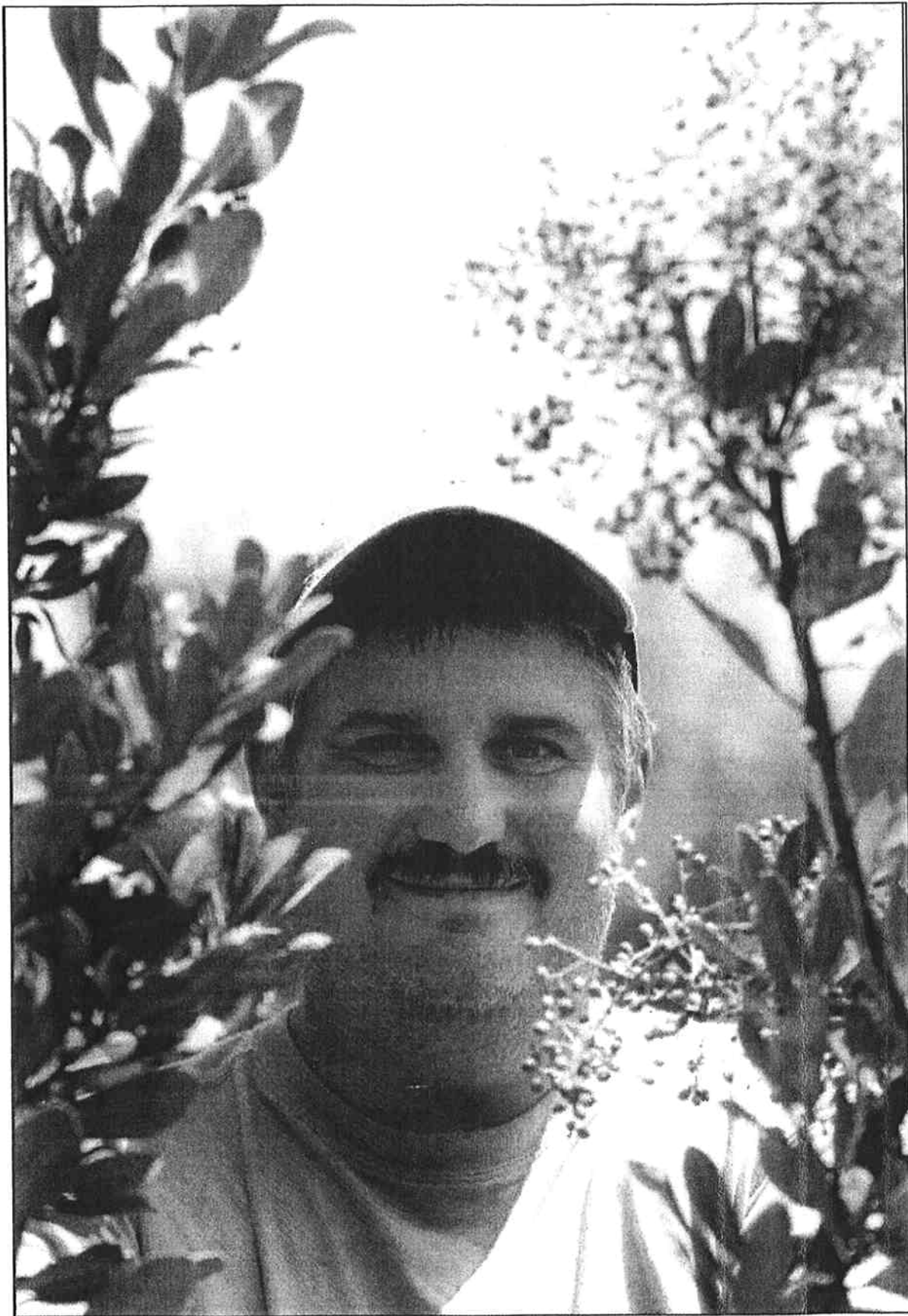
He enjoys the program because through it he not only gives back to the people of Irvine, but also to the wildlife that are dependent on native vegetation.

"You preserve California by planting native plants," Scrimger said. "It's all a big, huge pyramid. It's the way the native plants support the creatures that are actually here."

Scrimger has 80 to 100 five-gallon-size Monterey pines in his two rows that are about two years old. He said that caring for the plants gives him the pleasure of giving back to the community to keep it green and lush.

"I'd say first that it's not a lot of work. It's whatever you want to put into it," Scrimger said. "But, boy you get a lot of satisfaction from seeing these things grow."

**CONTACT THE WRITER:**



PHOTOS BY MIKE SCHWARTZ / IRVINE WORLD NEWS

**ROBERT SCRIMGER** is one of the volunteers in the Adopt-A-Row program at the Shadetree Partnership nursery. A big fan of native plants, one of his favorites is the toyon surrounding him here.