

At the September 2020 board meeting, the Ocean View Farm’s board voted unanimously to ban the plant wild fennel from OVF. There were many reasons to take this action, including the following:

**A. WILD FENNEL IS AN INVASIVE WEED THAT ENDANGERS CALIFORNIA’S NATIVE HABITATS.**

Wild fennel is universally regarded to be an invasive weed. The book “Weeds of California and Other Western States” states: “Fennel invades grasslands, riparian areas, and other natural communities, particularly in coastal regions of central and southern California. . . .Fennel is rated as a noxious weed.”

The California Invasive Plant Council designates wild fennel a “High Invasive” and concludes:

“WHAT PROBLEMS DOES IT CAUSE?”

Fennel will invade areas where the soil has been disturbed and can exclude or prevent reestablishment of native plant species. It can drastically alter the composition and structure of many plant communities, including grasslands, coastal scrub, riparian, and wetland communities. It appears to do this by outcompeting native species for light, nutrients, and water and perhaps by exuding allelopathic substances that inhibit growth of other plants. . . . Once established, fennel is tenacious and difficult to control. Because of its prolific seed production and seed viability, a long-lived seedbank can build up rapidly.” Read More: <https://www.cal-ipc.org/resources/library/publications/ipcw/report51/>

The U.S. National Park Service has compiled an “Invasive Weed Field Guide” for the local Santa Monica Mountains and included fennel, stating “it forms dense, difficult to control stands that inhibit the growth of other plants.”

OVF should not be part of the problem by spreading this harmful, invasive weed. Wild fennel is a problem at Ballona Creek, Santa Monica Mountains as well as other locale native habitats such as the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve. OVF has now banned this invasive weed for the good of the natural environment.

**B. WILD FENNEL SPREADS EASILY LIKE ANY WEED BUT ALSO BECOMES MORE DIFFICULT TO REMOVE OVER TIME.**

Wild fennel, like any successful weed, spreads easily. But wild fennel has several ‘super weed’ features that make it a more troublesome problem at OVF. As a perennial, it effectively never dies – it digs in with a deep taproot and keeps growing bigger. It can reproduce underground through its root crown and it also produces hundreds of seeds on stalks that can grow over six feet tall. These seeds are dispersed by the wind and by birds.

Unlike bulb fennel or bronze fennel, no nursery sells wild fennel seedlings, no seed company sells wild fennel seeds. It only exists at the OVF because, as a powerful weed, it has pushed its way in and has been allowed to grow and spread.

Unlike other common weeds, if left alone wild fennel gets harder to remove. Wild fennel digs in and its root ball grows and its tap roots get deeper. If a member merely chops down the stalks, they haven’t

stopped it. They have to dig it out of the ground, and the longer they wait to do that, the harder the task becomes.

It is important to prevent wild fennel plants from establishing in the garden in the first place. By banning wild fennel, OVF is making it easier for everyone to deal with this noxious weed by doing just that. Currently, we all face it as it spreads its seeds throughout the garden. We all face having to dig it out when those seeds take root in our plots. It will save everyone time and effort in the future if we don't have to keep dealing with this weed.

### **C. THE BEES AND BUTTERFLIES DESERVE BETTER.**

Wild fennel is in the family *Apiaceae* that is characterized by umbels, which are favored by bees and butterflies. Read More: <https://gardenerd.com/blog/whats-growin-on-blog/beneficial-flowers-build-your-ecosystem>.

The *Apiaceae* family includes many plants that are already grown in the garden, including carrots, parsnips, celery, dill and parsley. Wild fennel, with its umbel inflorescence of flowers, is not unique. If the goal is to benefit bees and butterflies, there are less harmful flowering plants to consider. Wild fennel is not a native, and native bees and butterflies benefit from native plants. For example, wild fennel is claimed to be a food source for the anise swallowtail butterfly, but native plants, such as California yampah, supported the anise swallowtail before the wild fennel invaded. The anise swallowtail has adapted to feeding on fennel, but native plants have always supported it. Read More: [https://www.laspilitas.com/butterflies/Butterflies\\_and\\_Moths/Anise\\_swallowtail/Anise\\_swallowtail.html](https://www.laspilitas.com/butterflies/Butterflies_and_Moths/Anise_swallowtail/Anise_swallowtail.html).

The answer is not to encourage the harmful invasive species that insects have been forced to adapt to but rather remove the invasive and replace it with helpful native plants. Permitting wild fennel to grow in the garden does not help nature.

### **D. WILD FENNEL HURTS THE VEGETABLES GROWN IN MEMBER PLOTS.**

Wild fennel is allelopathic. It will adversely impact the growth of other plants around it. It's the opposite of a companion plant, as noted by many gardening websites, for example:

#### **"Poor Companion Plant**

Fennel makes a poor companion plant for just about every crop, secreting a substance from its roots that inhibits the growth of its neighbors. It is particularly effective insidious against beans (*Phaseolus spp.*), tomatoes (*Solanum lycopersicum*) and kohlrabi (*Brassica oleracea var. gongylodes*) according to *Plants for a Future*. If grown near wormwood or coriander, fennel will struggle to grow. If planted near dill (*Anethum graveolens*), the two plants may cross-pollinate and hybridize, creating strange-tasting offspring." <https://homeguides.sfgate.com/cons-growing-florence-fennel-80500.html>

For all of these reasons, the OVF board has voted to ban wild fennel in the garden. We will all be better off when it's finally gone.

**Pictures of wild fennel**

Young wild fennel:





Middle aged wild fennel:



Mature wild fennel:





Flowering wild fennel:



Chopped but not dead wild fennel: the root ball:

