Reasons why we want to replace our Chinese Flame Tree (Koelreuteria bipinnata) with a different tree

1. Pushing up sidewalk, creating a dangerous trip hazard and incurring liability for us. (And possibly incurring cost of sidewalk repair for us.)

- We don't want to see anyone injured by the displaced sidewalk, and we don't want to be liable for any injury or damage caused by a damaged sidewalk.

- The El Cerrito Municipal Code – which is the legally binding record of the rights and responsibilities of the City and property owners – says property owners are liable for injury or damage caused by unsafe sidewalks and that property owners are responsible for repairing sidewalks damaged by trees:

  13.20.090 - Maintenance and repair of sidewalks.
  A. Each owner of real property adjacent to any sidewalk in the city shall maintain such sidewalk in a non-dangerous condition, and shall repair and replace such sidewalk whenever necessary to maintain it in such condition.
  B. If, as a result of the failure of any property owner to maintain such sidewalk in a non-dangerous condition as required by subsection A of this section, any person suffers injury or damage to person or property, such property owner shall be liable to such person for such damage or injury.

  13.20.200 - Damage to curbs, gutters or sidewalks from trees.
  If a curb, gutter or sidewalk has been damaged, replacement thereof shall be the responsibility of the property owner abutting on such property to replace the same to original line and grade. Upon failure of the property owner to do so, the city has the authority to proceed under the provisions set forth in Chapter 22 of Part 3 of Division 7 of the state Streets and Highways Code, and to make the cost of restoring or replacing said curb, gutter or sidewalk a lien on the property in the manner provided.
2. Limbs prone to break and fall, creating safety and damage hazard.

- The wood is weak and brittle, filled with soft pulp, and breaks easily.

- This particular tree is nearing 30 years old, the age when this species begins breaking up, according to the US Forest Service.

- Limbs are breaking off and falling. One crashed to the sidewalk when I was away, and it was too big for my wife to move. Luckily a neighbor came over with a chain saw and cut it up.

- Another limb is about to break off soon. (see photo)

- We don’t want a limb to fall on a passer-by or on a car.

3. Produces a huge number of seeds that create a continual burden of dealing with many difficult-to-remove seedlings in our yards and neighbors’ yards.

- The roots grow quickly and deep, making the plants hard to remove unless caught right away. (My wife tries to pull them out of our neighbors’ yards and a nearby community garden when she can, but it’s a difficult chore and we often miss some.)
4. The tree sheds far more foliage than most trees – not just leaves, but also stems, flowers and seed pods – over a period of several weeks into our yard, the sidewalk, our neighbors’ yards and the street.

- The tree is twice the size of what we were told we were getting when we got the tree under El Cerrito’s Adopt-a-Tree program.

- The information we received from the City at the time said the tree would grow to 30 feet (see City info sheet on next page), but it’s now over 40 feet and still growing. The extra height and width of the crown has doubled the foliage over what it had been at 30 feet. If we had known it would grow so large, we wouldn’t have adopted it.

- The Chinese Flame Tree is designated as a good shade tree because it produces much more foliage than trees on average.

- Our street is unusually windy and blows the debris onto neighbors’ property, which creates an inconvenience for them.

- It requires daily pick-up to keep up with the volume.

- My wife and I are seniors now and our sons have left home – we are becoming less physically able to continue with this time-consuming chore.

Our tree is largest street tree by far on the block. Note tree heights relative to the power lines.
City of El Centro

Thank you for your patience and for your participation in this project.

The purpose of the City's Adopt-a-Treeprogram is to promote a healthy and aesthetically pleasing environment for our residents and visitors. The program encourages the planting of trees throughout the City to improve the overall quality of life in our community. By participating in this program, you will be helping to create a more beautiful and sustainable environment.

The City of El Centro is proud to offer this program to residents and businesses in our community. We hope that you will consider participating and that you will enjoy the benefits of having trees in your yard or on your property.

ADOPT-A-TREE PROGRAM

City of El Centro

KOELETSUERIA BIPINNATA

Information Sheet Provided With City’s Adopt-a-Tree Program

AVAILABILITY: Readily available, container stock

PEST & DISEASES: No known pests

MICROCLIMATE - Tolerant of heat, microclimate not critical

SITE: Stream edges, city parks, and recreation areas

ROOTS: Fast-moving stream

SOIL: Require good drainage

WATER: Require periodic irrigation

SNL - Tolerate full sun

TOLENTANCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRECONDITIONS

Prefer moist, well-drained soil and full sun.

Green leaf in full sun.