

A hundred feet or so inside the entrance to Los Trancos Trail in Wildhorse Valley, there is a large tall maple. Is that a big leaf maple?

Yes.

Some things to keep in mind when identifying a Bigleaf Maple (*Acer macrophyllum*, also known as Broadleaf Maple and Oregon Maple) are:

- It is a small to large tree with a rounded crown of drooping branches.
- It has the largest leaves of any maple, up to 10 inches across with leaf stems also up to 10 inches long, leaf edges have 5 deep lobes which sometimes have smaller lobes on them; leaves are dark, shiny green above and paler underneath.
- If you break off a leafstalk, the broken portion will exude a milky white sap.
- The twin seeds (commonly called helicopters) are up to an inch and half long each.
- The Bigleaf maple is native to the pacific coast and is found from Canada south through central California.
- It is the only maple on the west coast that is commercially valuable. The wood can be used to make veneers, furniture, handles and woodenware; maple syrup can be distilled from the sap. Native Americans used the wood to make paddles.

(Adapted from National Audobon Society Field Guide to North American Trees).