



VOLUNTEERS paint limewash on oak trees in Silverado Canyon. The experimental treatment is an alternative to pesticide injections.

ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

A tree-killing beetle’s death march

Goldspotted oak borer nears the Santa Monica Mountains. Can it be stopped?

The tree was dead.

Ron Durbin, who trekked with a group into a rugged Santa Clarita canyon, quickly spotted nearby trees pockmarked with D-shaped “exit holes,” a deadly calling card.

This was the work of the goldspotted oak borer, explained Durbin, forestry division chief for the Los Angeles County Fire Department. And the discovery earlier this year alarmed those who know what this tiny beetle is capable of.

The insects’ presence in East Canyon, along with nearby Rice and Whitney canyons, puts them just 14 miles from the oak-rich Santa Monica Mountains. They were also recently detected in a new area of Silverado Canyon in eastern Orange County.

Durbin described the goldspotted oak borer as “just like a cancer.” It has spread



THE GOLDSPOTTED oak borer is believed to have arrived in San Diego County via firewood.

SHANE BROWN

across Southern California since its discovery in 2008 in San Diego County, where it has killed more than 80,000 trees. “It’s metastasized,” he said. “It’s stage four.”

A coalition of fire officials, land managers, local representatives and pest experts across Southern California are racing to slow the death march — acknowledging that eradication isn’t possible.

Much is at stake.

There are roughly 600,000 coast live oaks in the Santa Monica Mountains. Their demise would spell the loss of shade, wildlife habitat and beauty — and pose significant fire hazards.

On May 7, the L.A. County Board of Supervisors passed a motion to explore declaring a state of emergency and finding funding

How bad will next COVID wave be?

Amid the rise of FLiRT subvariants, experts see no red flags yet for summer.

BY RONG-GONG LIN II

As the new FLiRT family of coronavirus subvariants takes hold, early signs are pointing to a summer jump in cases.

So how bad could it get?

Experts so far are cautiously optimistic, saying the numbers are within expectations and there currently are no signs of any red flags.

But the new variants are a reminder that the coronavirus remains a major health risk for some, even as much of the world has tried to move past the pandemic. While California’s COVID numbers look relatively good, officials say FLiRT’s rise shows the need to stay vigilant with basic safety measures.

“For the majority of people, it is not a big deal. But for some people, it is a big deal,” said Dr. Peter Chin-Hong, a UC San Francisco infectious-disease specialist, speaking of COVID-19.

A referendum on Mexico’s leader

As 2 women vie for presidency, race is focused on the man departing

BY PATRICK J. McDONNELL AND KATE LINTHICUM

MEXICO CITY — Andrés Manuel López Obrador is not on the ballot in Mexico’s presidential election on Sunday. But he might as well be.

The vote is widely viewed as a referendum on the popular but polarizing president known for pulling millions of Mexicans out of poverty while weakening some of the country’s key institutions, emboldening the military and failing to stem an epidemic of brutal gang



A CUTOUT of presidential candidate Claudia Sheinbaum is held aloft at a Mexico City rally in March.

AUREA DEL ROSARIO Associated Press

violence.

Claudia Sheinbaum, López Obrador’s protegee and the former mayor of Mexico City, is heavily favored to win the election — in large part because she has vowed to advance his signature projects, including welfare programs and efforts to reform the judiciary.

Meanwhile her chief opponent, Xóchitl Gálvez, an entrepreneur and former senator who represents an opposition coalition, has sought to tap into resentment among the middle and upper classes against the current president, who is

Asians favor SAT in admission decisions

Poll results come as some colleges have restored standardized testing requirements.

BY TERESA WATANABE

Most Asian American adults support use of the SAT and other standardized testing, along with high school grades, in college admission decisions but reject considering race or ethnicity to determine access, accord-

ing to a new national survey released this week.

The majority also think it’s unfair for colleges to consider an applicant’s athletic ability, family alumni ties, ability to pay full tuition or parents’ educational levels in determining who should get acceptance letters, the survey found.

At the same time, most Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders surveyed believe that slavery, racism and segregation should be taught in schools and oppose individ-

ual school boards restricting classroom discussion of specific topics, as some conservative districts have done.

Overall, AAPI adults value higher education not only as a pathway to economic well-being but for teaching critical thinking, fostering the free exchange of ideas and advancing equity and inclusion.

The survey by AAPI Data, a UC research enterprise, and the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research interviewed a nationally repre-

sentative sample of 1,068 AAPI adults age 18 and older. The poll, conducted April 8-17 in English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese and Korean, has a margin of error of 4.7 percentage points.

The poll offers a comprehensive look at attitudes toward education among Asian Americans, who make up a disproportionately large share of students at the University of California and other selective institutions — yet are often overlooked in policy discussions about eq-

Trump verdict may be a wildcard in House

The conviction might sway swing voters in a California district key to determining control of Congress.

BY FAITH E. PINHO AND JULIA WICK

Sharing a salt-and-butter breakfast roll with her grandson at a Newhall bakery, stalwart Republican Jill Brown said former President Trump’s guilty verdict in a Manhattan courtroom won’t dent her plans to vote for him in the November presidential election.

The longtime Santa Clarita resident and retired teacher, who voted for Trump in 2016 and 2020, suspects that President Biden is also guilty of unspecified crimes and didn’t know why prosecutors were focusing on Trump’s actions.

“Hush money has been going on since the beginning of time. So I don’t know why they’re making such a big deal about it,” Brown, 69, said Friday.

In Santa Clarita, nestled in a hotly contested congressional district that is expected to help determine which party controls Congress next year, Trump’s guilty verdict did little to sway Brown or other hardcore Republicans.

But it may nudge moderate swing voters, and that could be pivotal in deciding the fate of Rep. Mike Garcia (R-Santa Clarita) in this election.

Still, it remains to be seen whether the verdict — and any corresponding stain on the presumptive Republican presidential nominee — will affect a congressional race in which the overheated national discourse has often taken a backseat to the issues affecting the day-to-day lives of Californians.

“Those who try to nationalize this race and make everything super partisan fundamentally misunderstand our district,” said Charles Hughes, an Antelope Valley resident and

As Trump rants, Biden governs

Ex-president focuses on personal grievances while incumbent tends to state affairs.

PERSPECTIVES, A2

UC strike is a sticky situation

Labor experts are debating the repercussions of a walkout that’s partly a protest.

CALIFORNIA, B1

UCLA catcher leading the way

Sharlize Palacios has Bruins thriving at Women’s College World Series with bat and heart.

SPORTS, B12

Weather
Turning sunny.
L.A. Basin: 73/58. **B8**

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