Why Pollard Trees

By Margaret Missiaen

The trees planted near the Heritage on Laguna, Francisco and Chestnut streets are London plane trees. On most of the trees, the bark peels away to show a cream-colored inner bark. The bright green leaves are similar to those of the maple, but larger.

Characteristics of the trees show a great deal of variation, because they are hybrids, that are often mistaken for one of the parents, the American sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis)* or the Asian planetree (*Platanus orientalis*).

Along streets these large specimens can cause problems by reducing visibility, blocking drains and lifting paving. One way of managing this is to pollard them and it is better than removing them.

Pollarding involves cutting back the branches of a tree to a point, known as the “pollard head”. This is usually done when the tree is dormant to minimize the stress on the tree. The pollard head will grow new shoots, which will form the new branches of the tree. It is a common practice in urban areas, where trees are often planted in small spaces and need to be kept under control. Recently, I found arborists pollarding the trees on Laguna. (See photos.)