

## Why Crews Allow Open Space Vegetation to Grow

Now that the winter rains are almost over, Brentwood residents may notice that the vegetation in City open space areas appears to be overgrown.

It is, and for a good reason, says City Landscape/Facilities Manager Ken DeSilva.

It's all part of the Parks Department's Open Space Management program or as DeSilva states in a report to the City Parks Commission, "developing a more comprehensive policy for maintaining open space areas within the City's responsibility."

The program's goals state that "open space owned and operated by the City are resources that shall be managed in a manner consistent with good stewardship and sound ecological principles that benefit the citizens of Brentwood."

So, what's this got to do with overgrown vegetation? If the vegetation isn't allowed to grow tall, the grasses won't come back next fall.

"It is an annual grass that only comes from seed. If we mow, the grass comes down before the seed sets on it," DeSilva says.

But the City doesn't let the weeds get out of control and pose a potential fire hazard. Firebreaks are established and weeds cut down according to the dictates of the City's code enforcement policies.

Letting the weeds grow a little longer for the grass' benefit is only one of the practices prescribed by the Open Space Management program.

Others include:

- Open space is mowed twice annu-

ally — early spring and early summer.

- Weeds are cut and tilled under along fence lines in spring and again in summer as needed.

- Open space areas are patrolled for litter on a bi-monthly basis, although park staffers respond to all citizen reports of litter in the interim.

- The department prefers to mow areas where possible, instead of disking or treating with pesticides. Mowing is the most effective deterrent to Russian or yellow star thistle.

- Wetland areas are usually left alone except for litter removal and controlling certain noxious weeds.

Funding for maintenance of the City's open space areas comes from the City's general fund and the Park Assessment and the Lighting and Landscape districts.

## City's King Park Is for Our Four-Legged Friends

(KING, from Page 1)

The 4.5-acre park at 1379 Bauer Road will be dedicated this summer and will be open to dogs as well as people.

King was the pet and unofficial guardian of Douglas Allen who, 75 years ago, was the youngest son of the then-publishers of the Brentwood News, Ed and Gertrude Allen. His original collar and county dog tag, dated 1937, number one, are on display at the East Contra Costa Historical Museum in Knightsen.

County officials no longer have records of dog licensing before the 1980s, when Animal Services assumed the responsibility, and could not verify King's claim to being the first dog ever licensed in Contra Costa County.

Officials in the California League of Cities and California Parks and Recreation Society say they could not recall a California park ever named for a dog.

Longtime resident Barbara Bonnickson remembers seeing the young Doug Allen and his siblings traveling about town, always in the company of King. Brentwood

was a town of maybe 900 people then.

Back then, everybody knew the Allen children or where they were by noting King's presence.

Even Allen, now of Modesto, recalls that his mother would call the town's sole telephone operator in back of the grocery store and ask for his whereabouts.

"She would ask, 'Bert, have you seen (Doug)?' 'No, but I see King, so he can't be far,' he would say," recalls Allen.

King's reputation around town was a sober-minded dog who didn't growl at anyone but was always alert and protective of the Allen kids.

King was a silver and black German shepherd who initially belonged to the Griffith service station operator in town. Allen recalls that he used to stop by and pet King on a regular basis and that King often followed him.

One day King followed Allen home.

"The next morning I took him back," says Allen. "That afternoon, he was at the house again. I took him back again and he looked at me so sadly as I walked

away and the owner said you might as well keep him."

Bonnickson in describing the dog as the Allen kids' guardian says, "He never left their side. He was constantly their companion and their guide. If he was not where they were, he would go and see that they were safe."

Allen recalls getting into a dispute with a schoolmate and a shoving match started. The other boy grabbed Allen.

"King grabbed his pants leg," he says. "He didn't break the skin, but he about tore his pants off."

King was once accused of killing sheep, a death sentence for a dog in an agricultural community such as Brentwood. A resident testified on King's behalf, saying he wasn't attacking sheep but protecting them from a pack of dogs that were attacking the flock.

King grew older and eventually had to be taken to a vet to be put down.

"For a month after that," recalls Allen, "I expected him to come out to see me when I came home from school."