

Opinion: Inexplicable war on trees

By **Patt Morrison, Los Angeles Times**

Do we ever really pause to think of a tree as its own self? Not as a picturesque forest backdrop to our vacation selfies, not as lumber for a deck, nor as the makings of a campfire – but a tree as a living thing with billions more of its kind, that, all together, undergird our human existence, and, in fact, make it possible?

No, it's not likely that we do. We treat thousand-year-old groves as if they were last season's growth of Christmas trees. We guard our money, we put alarms on our cars, but for the forests that clean the air and enrich the soil, we just mow them down like so much field corn. We post no guards on old-growth woods, and so timber cartels simply hack down and steal trees that are older than the printed word, cut them up and sell them for millions of dollars on a black market for rare wood, like illegal weapons or poached ivory.

Richard Powers lived among the trees for his new novel, "The Overstory." It sets the scale of human life against the magnificence of our arboreal heritage, with characters who come to think "arborescently" about trees as fellow creatures who can be the saving of humanity; but first, we have to save them.

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