



Our Backyard

Volume 7
Issue 3
Fall 2007

A NEWSLETTER ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN SAANICH



Green Dream Homes

Are you building or renovating a home?
Consider the benefits of "going green":

- Save on heating and electrical costs
- Reduce carbon emissions
- Improve indoor air quality by using non toxic materials
- Increase your comfort with improved lighting and temperature systems
- Feel great about reducing your impact on the natural environment.

Over 70 % of the homes in Saanich were built prior to 1983, and have generally poor energy efficiency ratings. Starting September 4, 2007, the District of Saanich and City Green Solutions are joining forces to promote green building practices in single family homes -- both new and existing. Your Saanich Building Permit application will include an optional free one hour consultation with an energy advisor at City Green who will guide you through the green building process and advise you on sustainable building practices, potential rebates and green home certifications. Certified green homes will also be eligible for up to 30% rebate on building permit fees.

Is your home solar ready? Does it cost more to be eco-friendly? Ask City Green your specific questions and let them do the background research for you. They will also provide you with a customized Green Building Resource Package on planning, efficient new construction options, retrofit options, energy efficiency and renewable energy products and green building supplies.

Lower your energy bills, improve your home's indoor air quality and regulate indoor temperatures for increased home comfort -- and learn about the grants and rebates available to reduce the upfront costs of these investments in your home and family's future.



Sustainable Saanich Series #5:



Thinking Outside the Green Building

Friday, September 21, 2007, 2-4:30pm,
University of Victoria, Room 125,
Engineering & Computer Science Building.
To register for this free lecture,
email: sustainablesaanich@gmail.com
or call 391-8772.



For more information,
contact: Paula Steele
energiguide@citygreen.ca



Turn your oak leaves into wildflowers!

If you're lucky enough to have Garry oak trees on your property, you're caring for a piece of a disappearing ecosystem. Only 1% -5 % of Garry oak ecosystems remain compared to 150 years ago and are one of Canada's top three most endangered ecosystems.

Caring for your Garry oak habitat starts with rebuilding soil and controlling invasive weeds. The soil surrounding our urban oaks is often poor and compacted. By rebuilding healthy soil, you return nutrients, improve moisture retention, and create the right conditions for native plants to germinate.

Leave those leaves!

Oak leaves are natural mulch that restores and builds soil. Simply let your oak leaves lie where they fall, or place them in a thick (up to 30 cm) layer around your oak trees and throughout your meadow. Leaf decomposition will hasten if they are kept moist. If you need to supplement your leaf supply, the Saanich Public Works department re-distributes leaf mulch to residential depots. Visit <http://www.saanich.ca/resident/utilities/leaf.html> to locate a depot near you or contact Public Works (475-5595) in September. Thick leaf mulch will also reduce competition from turf grass and has the added advantage of smothering out invasive weeds, the next step in caring for your Garry oak habitat.

Eliminating Weeds

Invasive weeds threaten Garry oak ecosystems by smothering out native plants. Weed-whack that blackberry, pull that Scotch broom, Daphne and Lamium and get your lawn off grass! It is much easier to address young or solitary weed plants before they grow into serious infestations. Doing so will create space for native plants and improve habitat for birds and other wildlife.



Leaf a legacy

Encourage native plants and enjoy your beautiful, low-maintenance native wildflower meadow! Protecting Garry oaks and their ecosystems in your backyard will allow future generations to enjoy these special places.

-Geoff Huber,
Habitat Acquisition Trust

For more information, please contact Habitat Acquisition Trust at 995-2428 or by email at hatmail@hat.bc.ca.



Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team

To learn more about how you can tend your own Garry oak garden, please visit: www.goert.ca to check out the highly anticipated Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team's Garry Oak Gardener's Handbook, a resource for people interested in restoring and caring for Garry oak habitat in their 'backyard'

Real Monsters in your backyard

~ Norm Mogensen



Homesick settlers brought them here, out of reach of their natural enemies and allowed them to thrive here. We are so used to them that they seem natural and normal. They've become the silent killers of our urban forest ecosystems, including natural remnants in our back yards.

What are they? They are English holly and ivy; Himalayan blackberries and broom; they are Daphne and periwinkle; and all sorts of other alien plant species which have escaped from our gardens to displace our native species. Even when the natural ecosystems have been cleared and these species are

allowed to remain in back yards, those yards act as seed orchards and sources of ground creeping infection of surrounding lands.

At one time, men chewed tobacco and spat sometimes without discrimination, even indoors. Society moved to a consensus that this was unacceptable behaviour and we're all glad of it now. Having destructive invasive species on our private property can be likened to such examples and our society is moving strongly toward recognition of this. Do your part to help to keep the monsters at bay, particularly in your own backyards, or soon, there will be little left of our urban natural areas.

Hartland Open House

On Saturday, September 15, 9:30am - 2:00pm, Hartland Landfill opens its gate for its second annual Open House. This is your chance to sneak a peak at the inner workings of the award-winning landfill and explore the place your waste goes to rest or be reborn.



Last year Capital Regional District staff welcomed almost 600 people to the landfill. "I had always been curious to see what was 'behind the scenes,'" said one visitor. "When I finally saw the site, the most significant point for me was that it was not full of garbage, odour, seagulls and bulldozers; instead it was almost scenic enough to be a park!"

Hartland Landfill is the region's only municipal solid waste facility. The landfill provides a variety of services, including refuse disposal, recycling of 23 different materials, household hazardous waste collection, a salvage area, yard and garden waste collection and processing, and controlled waste disposal. Hartland has been recognized as an internationally acclaimed state-of-the-art facility.

For more information on the Open House, contact the CRD Hotline at 360-3030 or by email at: hotline@crd.bc.ca.

Upcoming events & announcements

For full schedules and program details, please contact the appropriate agency directly



Swan Lake/Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary

For full information, visit our website
www.swanlake.bc.ca or call us at 479-0211.

Sept. 16, 1 to 3pm
Spider_websites @swanlake

Oct. 21, 1 to 3pm
Weird and Wonderful Animals

Nov 25, 1 to 3pm
How Animals Talk

Volunteer for Nature at Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary!

Assistant Naturalist positions
Get experience in natural history
interpretation by volunteering with
school programs. An interest in
nature and experience working with
children is desirable.

Invasive Plant Removal Crew
members
Work at your own pace and come out
when you can. Work parties will be
organized evenings and weekends.

Contact Joan at 479-0211 or by
email:
volunteer@swanlake.bc.ca.

Submissions and subscriptions can
be sent to the editor:
Nathalie Dechaine,
Environmental Education Officer
District of Saanich • 770 Vernon
Avenue • Victoria BC • V8X 2W7
Phone: 475-5475 • Fax: 475-5430
Email: dechainn@saanich.ca



Saanich Parks is supporting several community based
volunteer projects in parks near you. If you would like
to help restore native biodiversity, meet new people and
make a real difference, come out and help. There are
many days to choose from and training will be provided.

The Anti-Ivy League at Konukson Park (Ten Mile Point)
Norm Mogensen at 477- 9114, or at nmogensen@shaw.ca.

To volunteer at Mount Douglas, Bow, Brodick or Feltham parks,
please contact Judy Spearing at 472-0515 or by email jandd_spearing@shaw.ca.

Glendale Gardens & Woodland
505 Quayle Road ~ Phone 479-6162

Plant and Book Sale on Saturday September 29th from 9 am
to 1 pm. Check the website in mid September for a plant list at
www.hcp.bc.ca or email at info@hcp.bc.ca



Do you want to learn more about native
plants and Garry oaks?

Join our team of volunteers with
Saanich's Garry Oak Restoration
Project (GORP). Come out to get
your hands dirty, have fun and help
your local parks. Refreshments provided. For more information visit
www.gorpsaanich.com or contact Jenny at 744.1710.

Native Plant Study Group



Rub elbows with native plant experts, put an
anonymous question in the jar, win a native plant
in the raffle and learn from a diverse group of
presenters. Drop in rate is only a \$2 or \$15 for a
year's membership. We meet at the University of
Victoria in the MacLaurin building @ 7pm on the

third Thursday of every month:

Sept. 20 ~ Room D110

Oct. 18 ~ Room D110

Nov. 15 ~ Room D116

Visit www.npsg.ca for more information.

Get Out & Give Back!

Volunteer with a team to remove invasive species at Mill Hill
Regional Park. See the blooms of your labour in the spring!
Saturdays (Oct 13 - Nov 3) 478-3344 or email
parksvolunteer@crd.bc.ca