

# Our Backyard

A NEWSLETTER ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN SAANICH

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## *Playing it Safe with Pesticides*

There is a growing trend for Canadian municipalities to raise awareness and enact bylaws about the potential negative health and environmental impacts of pesticide use in our communities. The Capital Regional District (CRD) Roundtable on the Environment has already taken several steps towards their vision to reduce in the short-term and eliminate in the long-term, non-essential pesticide use in the region.

The first component of the Action Plan is a Public Education Program which is already underway and follows a CRD public survey which indicates 76% of residents would support a bylaw. This program focuses on pesticide alternatives for lawn care and the benefits of reducing lawn areas all together, which in turn ties in with reduced water consumption, reduces fertilizer use and the need for gas mowers (greenhouse gases).

The CRD has also created a series of fact sheets, posters, and leaflets about pesticide alternatives. The benefits of a regional approach to education include the recognition that purchasing pesticides and the impacts associated with their use, crosses municipal boundaries. These resources can be accessed from the CRD's website: [www.crd.bc.ca/rte/pest/info\\_resources.htm](http://www.crd.bc.ca/rte/pest/info_resources.htm) or can be picked up from their office at 625 Fisgard Street.

In 2003, the District of Saanich implemented an Integrated Pest Management Policy and has steadily reduced its use of pesticides over time. Saanich Environmental Services will continue to support this initiative by providing CRD's outreach materials for the residents of Saanich (3rd floor of Municipal Hall at the Planning counter) and our friendly Environmental Services staff will head out into the community to share ways to reduce cosmetic pesticide use in our region.

The second component of the CRD's Roundtable's Action Plan is a model pesticide-use bylaw which is being considered by individual municipalities. To view the a model bylaw, including a pesticide exemption list, please visit: <http://www.crd.bc.ca/rte/pest/index.htm>. In Canada, it is estimated that approximately 150 municipalities have adopted or are working on enacting pesticide-use bylaws.

**Healthy Choices to Control Lawn and Garden Pests**

**Playing It Safe**

For more information on alternatives to pesticides, contact:

CRD Hotline 360-3030  
hotline@crd.bc.ca

CRD Roundtable on the Environment  
[www.crd.bc.ca/rte/pest](http://www.crd.bc.ca/rte/pest)

**CRD** CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT  
Roundtable on the Environment

## The Garry Oak Gardener's Handbook:

# Nurturing Native Plant Habitat in Garry Oak Communities



Garry Oak  
Ecosystems  
Recovery Team

The Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team is pleased to announce the arrival of their new book, *The Garry Oak Gardener's Handbook*. This resource is for people who are fortunate enough to have remnants of Garry oak habitat in their yards, for community groups and schools undertaking projects on public land and for volunteers or professionals working with a landowner.



Chocolate Lily  
Photo credit E. Gonzales

In the handbook you'll find design plans and plant lists for Garry oak meadows, woodlands, rock outcrops, moist-soil gardens, hedgerows and thickets, container gardens, and butterfly gardens, as well as tips on planning your garden, removing invasive species, acquiring plants, soil preparation,

caring for Garry oak trees, dealing with deer, and much more.

In addition to contributing toward the recovery of our local endangered Garry oak ecosystems, there are many benefits to becoming a Garry oak gardener. You can:

- reduce maintenance chores such as mowing lawns, watering and replacing short-lived ornamental plants
- enjoy the beauty and diversity of your yard's attractive wildflowers, butterflies and birds
- save water by replacing water-hungry lawns and ornamental gardens with water-thrifty native plants
- eliminate the need for harmful chemical fertilizers and herbicides
- watch your property values grow as trees mature and your easy-care native garden becomes more highly regarded

If you would like to explore the idea of working with native wildflowers such as camas, chocolate lilies, and shooting stars, along with native grasses, shrubs and trees, please take a look at the handbook. Printed copies are available by donation, through the Saanich Municipal Hall at the Planning counter or by request through the GOERT office ([info@goert.ca](mailto:info@goert.ca) or 383-3427). You can also view or download the book online: [www.goert.ca](http://www.goert.ca) under 'at home and in your community' and then to 'the Garry oak gardener'.

Good luck and happy Garry oak gardening,

Carolyn Masson

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| A lifeline for our rarest species |

# Turfing the Turf: Hands-on Learning to Promote Ecosystem Health

Students at the University of Victoria had a unique opportunity to take learning outside of the classroom and on to the campus grounds. In the fall of 2007, students in Environmental Studies 341 were given a chance to design and plant a new landscape at UVic using the guidance and expertise of their professor, Dr. Valentin Schaefer, and Grounds Staff in the department of Facilities Management.

Transforming the lawn space into a natural landscape was no easy task but students were keen to get their hands dirty. With the assistance of the Grounds Division, students learned how to remove exotic grasses, design a landscape plan, propagate native plants, and plant them on site.

“This project is a wonderful example of how we can use our campus as a living laboratory in order to forward sustainability in the region,” says Sarah Webb, Campus Sustainability Coordinator who coordinated the project between Facilities Management, Environmental Studies and the Office of Campus Planning and Sustainability.

The Elliot Naturescape Garden is organized into three themes: Garry oak ecosystem, Douglas-Fir/ Grand Fir ecosystem, and an edible garden. These themes aim to capture the diversity of the Coastal Douglas-Fir biogeoclimatic zone and promote increased biodiversity of flora and fauna on campus.

Surrounded by lecture theatres and walking paths, the garden space offers a central location for the campus and broader community to reconnect with the natural environment. More than 400 plants and seeds were used on site including red -osier dogwood, lady ferns, Nootka rose, honeysuckle, mock orange and great camas.

A celebration ceremony was held on November 5, 2007 and attracted more than fifty people. With golden shovels in hand, a group of four representatives proudly planted a Garry oak tree on site to commemorate this special project.



**University  
of Victoria**



*Turning the Soil with Golden Shovels: Jamie Cassels, Vice President Academic and Provost, Val Schaefer, Coordinator Ecological Restoration Program, Rhonda Rose, Grounds Supervisor Facilities Management, and Kaegen Shepherd, Environmental Studies Student.*

# Upcoming events & announcements

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



## Swan Lake/Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary

[www.swanlake.bc.ca](http://www.swanlake.bc.ca) or 479-0211

Join the Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary for family programs throughout the year.

### Holiday Season

From Dec. 27th - Jan. 4th we'll have programs on papermaking, winter bird feeding, crafty cones, how plants and animals defend themselves, and walks around the lake and up the hill.

### Spring Break (March 17-25)

More opportunities for nature crafts, exploration walks around the lake, and nature fun for the whole family.

### Marine Birds

A course for naturalists and enthusiasts interested in marine birds and their behaviour will be offered at Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary for 5 weeks beginning Feb 28, 2008 .

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](mailto:dechainn@saanich.ca)



### G O T T R E E S ?

Saanich Significant Tree Committee is compiling an inventory of trees in Saanich that are important to our community due to heritage, landmark or wildlife value for the enjoyment of all tree lovers.

Now accepting nominations!

Our current significant tree list is available on-line at [www.saanich.ca](http://www.saanich.ca).  
For more information, call 475-1775, local 3506.



Saanich Parks

[www.saanich.ca](http://www.saanich.ca)

475-5522



### Garry Oak Restoration Project

For more information about the project, the sites or the schedule, please visit:

[www.gorpsaanich.com](http://www.gorpsaanich.com)

### 2008 Work Parties

Saturday, January 12 Feltham Park 9:30-11:30 AM  
*Remove Ivy & Blackberries*

Saturday, January 19 Chatterton Hill Park 9:30-11:30 AM  
*Remove Various Invasives*

Saturday, January 26 Camas Park 9:30-11:30 AM  
*Remove Various Invasives*



### Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team

There is now an online discussion forum on the GOERT website. Go to [www.goert.ca](http://www.goert.ca) and click on 'public forum' at the top of the page.

Once you've registered, you can post questions and join in discussions on topics such as native plant gardening, Garry oak seedling exchanges, ecosystem restoration, and research. Come and join us!