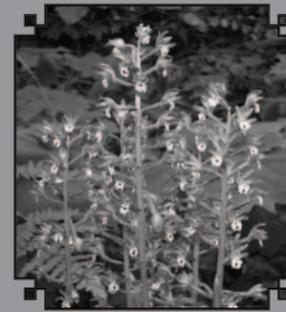




NOTES

Native Plant Study Group

FEBRUARY
2005



NEWS

Native Plant Study Group

FEBRUARY
2005

IDENTIFICATION BLUES

GRASSES

If my hair hadn't already gone gray from my children's teenage years, then grass identification might have done it anyway! However tough they seem to the uninitiated, grasses are the basis of many natural areas and if restoration is your goal, then getting a handle on a few of the most frequent native grasses is a big step forward.

The easiest way to start (for me) was to learn the most common of the invasive, introduced meadow grass species: orchard grass (*Dactylis glomerata*), sweet vernalgrass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), velvet-grass (*Holcus lanatus*) and early and silver hairgrass (*Aira praecox* and *A. caryophyllea*) are a good place to start.

Orchard grass is a tall (to 1.5 m), robust, perennial, clumping plant that was introduced for hay production and it looks like the nice, thick steak of the grass world. Even the flowers have a thick, bunched look that open into a wide, one-sided panicle of crowded heads. It has a thickish stem, the kind you might consider plucking and chewing on. Actually, it's not bad!

Sweet vernal-grass is a tufted or clumping, sweet-scented perennial about 30-60 cm tall that I recognize in the summer by its conspicuous tawny coloured, narrow, spike-like flowers.

Velvetgrass is another tufted perennial plant, 30-100 cm tall, that you will soon distinguish by its softly hairy leaf that has a velvety feel and a slight grayish cast. It too has a stem you might consider for a meadow snack.

Both early and silver hairgrass are very small (5-25 cm), very slender, annual grasses, common on rocky bluffs. Early hairgrass has a short, slim, spike-like flower head and silver hairgrass has an delicate open inflorescence.

Start with these few and before you know it you will be spotting them everywhere-well, they are everywhere! and you will soon get a feel for how few and precious are our native grasses.

GORGE RESTORATION PROJECT

NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

(Sub-group of the Victoria Horticultural Society)

The NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP is a non-political group dedicated to learning about B.C. native plants, as wild populations and in garden settings, and to supporting conservation of native plants and their habitats. The group is guided by a volunteer steering committee. Members are encouraged to volunteer for this committee. Participation in outside events, by the group, or by individual members using the NPSG name, is dependant on approval of the steering committee or, where indicated, by the at-large membership. Activities requiring funding must receive approval by the general membership.

Paula Hesje is the dynamic woman who is Project Manager for The Land Conservancy (TLC) on Vancouver Island. At the January 2005 meeting she explained the TLC history, mandate, objectives, conservation initiatives and the ongoing work that is proceeding on their property on the Gorge Waterway.

The TLC is a British Columbia province based, non-profit, charitable Land Trust that was founded in 1997 and is modeled after the National Trust of Britain, a venerable institution that has been around for about 110 years. Paula explained that The Land Conservancy conservation objectives encompass all of Canada, TLC works in the provincial sphere and Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) operates in a regional context. To date, TLC has raised \$16,000,000 towards ecosystem and historical conservation. They hope to protect areas of environmental significance; properties with cultural, historic, scientific, scenic or compatible recreational opportunities.

These are categorized in a variety of ways. There are natural heritage sites, such as South Winchelsea Island, which is home to the northernmost extent of Garry oak ecosystems and a dilapidated old home which is an important nursery for the red-listed Townsend's big-eared bats, cultural sites such as the Ross Bay Villa, Craigflower Manor House and Abkhazi Gardens and working landscapes

like Horse Fly Ranch, Wildwood and Talking Mountain Ranch, which include ecological significance with economic benefits. TLC goals include: stewardship and landowner contact, acquisition, long-term leases and conservation covenants.

I can attest to the fact that they have some wonderful conservation "holidays". I spent a few days last February with a fantastic group of like-minded people, learning new bio-engineering skills from Dave Polster while helping to shore up a slumping cliff on their waterfront property on the Cowichan River. For a paltry sum you get fed and housed and experience a fun and worthwhile endeavour. Not a holiday in the sense of rest and relaxation but more in the vein of "a change is as good as a rest"!

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SCHEDULE OF SPEAKERS SPRING 2005

March 17, 2005 - The Nature Conservancy of Canada - An Overview - Tim Ennis

April 21, 2005 - Rithet's Bog Restoration Project - Sharon Hartwell, Project Manager

May 19, 2005 - Sylvia Pincott - The Beauty of Small Things



WHAT'S UP

Native Plant Study Group



UPCOMING EVENTS

- Sat Feb 19 9:00 am**
Birding Rithet's Bog with David Allinson
- Sat Feb 19 1:00 pm**
People, Plants and Places at Francis/King Regional Park
- Sun Feb 20 8:30 am**
Birding Elk Lake and Beaver Lake with David Kelly
- Sun Feb 20 1:00 pm**
Oh Deer at Witty's Lagoon Regional Park
- Sat Feb 26 or 27**
Know Your Local Rocks with Atholl Sutherland-Brown.
- Sun Feb 27 1:00 pm**
Calls of the Wild at Devonian Reg. Park
- Sun Feb 27 1:00 pm**
Two, Two, Two Lakes in One at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park
- Mon Feb 28 10:00-2:00 pm**
Anderson Cove to Mount Maguire at East Sooke Regional Park
- Sat Mar 5 9:00-11:00 am**
Birds of Island View Beach at Island View Beach Regional Park
- Sun Mar 6 1:00-2:30 pm**
Myth, Magic and Medicine at Witty's Lagoon Regional Park
- Sat Mar 12 10:00 am**
Identifying Trees and Shrubs in Winter with Agnes Lynn at Phyllis Park (Ten Mile Point)
- Sat Mar 12 1:00 pm**
Woodpecker Whittlings at Francis/King Regional Park
- Sun Mar 13 1:00 pm**
Horth Hill Highlights at Horth Hill Regional Park
- Sun Mar 13 1:00 pm**
Lofty Lone Tree at Lone Tree Regional Park
- Thu Mar 17 10:00-2:00 pm**
Upper Thetis and Beyond at Thetis Lake Regional Park
- April 23-24 10:00-3:00 pm**
Swan Lake Native Plant Sale 2005: Gardening for Wildlife

Sat Feb 19 10:00-4:00 pm,
SEEDY SATURDAY at the Victoria Conference Centre
This important "first gardening event of the year" serves not only to offer seeds and goods of interest to gardeners but seeks to expand the awareness and importance of saving and buying seeds, besides purchasing plants and vegetables locally. A reminder to all seed savers: the Community Seed Exchange table needs donated seed packages or seeds to swap at this important part of Seedy Saturday. (\$4 admission)

Sat Feb 26 10am-noon
(Rain or Shine) Pruning Workshop- Rejuvenating Heritage Fruit Trees with Carol Ponchet For more information or to register call 479-830

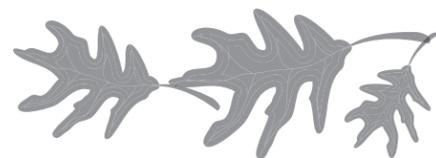
Workshop location: Ross Bay Villa, 1490 Fairfield Road. Cost: \$7 (proceeds go towards garden). Bring pad of paper and dress appropriately for outdoor activities.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

From Joan Cowley, Coordinator of Volunteer Services, Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary, we have a number of immediate opportunities:

- **Nature House Receptionist** afternoons, week days from 1:00 to 4:00pm
 - **Trail Building on Christmas Hill** - Fridays and Saturdays, morning and afternoon shifts. (This project will be completed by the middle of March.)
 - **Nature Interpreters** to work with school groups on site, weekdays, mornings or afternoons beginning the end of March. Training is provided.
- We will also be needing volunteers to again help us with the **Native Plant Sale**, April 23rd and 24th.



If you have been thinking about volunteering or know of someone who would be interested in volunteering, please contact Joan at 479 -0211 or email to volunteer@swanlake.bc.ca

Garry Oak Restoration Project Winter Work-Party Schedule

- Sunday, February 20th - Feltham site - 10:00 to Noon - Ivy removal

Contact Pat Johnston for information: patj@islandnet.com

John and Linda Beare are working on a small native plant border project at the James Bay Community Project and if anyone would like to help out with some "little plant" planting and placing of coarse woody debris they would appreciate it. They can be reached at 658-8993 or halcyon@telus.net.



GORGE RESTORATION CONT

TLC has a long-standing commitment to the cultural and ecological enhancement of the Gorger Waterway, where they hope to educate the public, restore shorelines, increase biodiversity and broaden networks and communication with professionals and the community.

The Gorge Waterway project, in partnership with many governmental and non-governmental organizations is working towards enhancement of a property near the Selkirk Trestle. The marine life there includes, bryozoans, tubeworms, anemones, sponges and an eelgrass fringe as well as fish species. Pre-restoration activities involved community consultation, geotechnical and archaeological surveys and contaminated site assessment as well as other impact and assessment surveys.

The final picture of pre-contact state is a bit murky but it seems it could have been either a fringe marsh or a cobble beach.

Next on the agenda is a design workshop, to discuss restoration or enhancement options, the restoration (or enhancement) plan, final approval and the physical task of implanting the plan. Work is tentatively scheduled to go ahead this spring and perhaps a NPSG trip to view the finished product would in order?



VIRAGS

You may think of the Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Garden Society (VIRAGS) as a group who only grows choice rock garden plants but they are a multi-faceted club. I personally do not have any sunny spots where I can have a traditional rock garden but there are a lot of other aspects to keep me involved. They are very knowledgeable about our native plants and many members are great at growing from seed. A big plus is the number of very experienced members who are more than willing to share their expertise.



One of the benefits of belonging to the club is the interesting program each month. We might enjoy a sampling of slides from areas around the world where a member or a guest speaker has visited and enjoyed the native flora. I have learned that knowing where a plant goes in the wild will increase your chance of success with the plant if you can emulate the growing conditions in your own garden. Alternatively, we might have a workshop. It might be on how to get seeds started or pricked out or how to divide your plants. We recently learned about starting ferns from spores. We often have discussions on various soil mixes. There are even recipes given

out as recommended by individual members. Another workshop I enjoyed was one where I learned how to make a hyper-tufa trough in which to grow some of the small treasures that benefit from growing in these containers.

Each year brings an exciting array of field trips. We are lucky to have both Adolf

Ceska and Hans Roemer, well-known botanists, as active members. They often lead trips locally or out-of-town to areas in BC and Washington. Last year we enjoyed Mount Washington, the year before was a trip to Hurricane Ridge and the previous year we enjoyed Colocum Pass in central Washington. This year looks like an interesting number of trips are lined up again. Check out the 2005 Natural History Outings list on the Environment page of www.CadboroBayToday.com for a tentative list of the trips VIRAGS has planned for this year. Generally the only charges for the outings are those to cover expenses.

So if you would like to get to know a bit more about what VIRAGS members grow, you could visit their fantastic Annual Show, this year on April 1 and 2, to view the immaculately prepared treasures. They have plants for sale at the show as well as excellent seeds. They also have a web site <http://victoria.tc.ca/Recreation/VIRAGS> where you can check out what is going on. You are welcome to attend the monthly meetings at 7:30 pm on the 4th Tuesday of each month (except Dec, Jul, Aug). They meet at Knox Presbyterian Church, 2964 Richmond Rd. If you decide you would like to join and receive the monthly newsletter, membership is \$20.00 per year.