

the Beauty of small things



ou know your life has changed when you start to appreciate and even enjoy

the creeping, crawling, swimming, burrowing and flying small creatures of the world! I know it took me many years to suppress the yeeww! factor in my own relationship with bugs. Sylvia Pincott can accomplish in one hour, that which took me many years to learn—that bugs are way cool, fascinating creatures that have a pivotal role in the functioning of our environment. Pincott is a woman with a mission as she passionately advocates on behalf of the 60,000 insect species in Canada. Who can forget “bug poop grows trees”, explaining in simple terms that soil invertebrates make nutrients available to plants, although it is a little awe inspiring to consider that 1,000,000 springtails can inhabit one tablespoon of soil. Even the mineral elements of their dead bodies contributes to soil health.

British biologist J.B.S. Haldane, when asked what he had learned about God from his studies replied he seemed to have “an inordinate fondness for beetles”. Over 350,000 beetle species have been described and many more might be awaiting discovery. They are waste processors, pollinators and predators and their diversity is thought to have contributed to the diversity of flowering plants. From a cycle that has beetles evolving new species to prey upon new plants, to plants evolving new species and strategies to outwit

beetles comes a significant portion of the biodiversity of the world. The three crucial elements to invertebrate habitat needs are food, water and shelter. To have insects work with you in your garden, we need to respect these needs. Mulch is the health care system of the soil as it holds in moisture, moderates temperatures and protects soil from excessive weather events. Pincott recommended a little less tidiness by retaining leaves on garden beds to provide cover and habitat.



WOODLAND SKIPPER ON ASTER

Always wanted to know the difference between a millipede and a centipede? Millipedes curl into a ball, smell like almonds (that’s cyanide!) and are herbivores. Centipedes are carnivores and help keep the plant eaters in check.

Pincott categorized insects as the five P’s: processors, “pests”, predators,

parasitoids and pollinators and gave informative, even astounding descriptions of some species.

High on the list of pests, especially if you’ve ever had a greenhouse, are aphids. Their eggs are laid in the autumn and hatch in the spring, with only females being reproduced. There are up to a dozen generations with no males. If the food supply fails, there is a generation with wings, which fly off in search of new food sources. In the fall a generation is produced with males that reproduce with the females and the cycle continues. Ladybug larva, which have an alligator-like appearance and green lacewing larva, both consume aphids. Another curiosity are the ants that “milk” their “herds” of aphids for their honeydew secretions, which I find just a little too anthromorphic!

Syrphid flies look like wasps and pollinate like bees. They are predators that also parasitize aphids.

Galls are swollen plants parts that can occur on many species, including oaks, roses and goldenrod. They are a chemical reaction to the egg of a small wasp being injected into a plant, which can then become the invertebrate counterpart of a condo, with up to 25 insect species inhabiting the gall. There are 37,000 species of spider globally with 3,000 species in North America. Spider silk is the strongest and most stretchy material known and baby spiders find new habitats by drifting with the wind on spider thread. Orchard mason bees are solitary

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Beauty of Small Things, con't...

pollinators who lay their eggs in small holes in trees. They layer eggs, pollen, nectar and mud walls between cells. The juvenile bees remain in the nest almost one year before emerging. The males come out first and mate with the females as soon as they emerge (sounds a bit incestuous doesn't it?). The males might also be more dispensable and could be eaten by a woodpecker searching the nest, without causing undue depopulation..

Pincott stressed that we should garden with our native wildlife in mind. Elderberry shrubs supply excellent habitat. Their early blossoms feed insects and hummingbirds, their branches become hollow when they die and provide homes to invertebrates, as well as offering roosts for hummers.

Other plants that Pincott recommended as beneficial in a garden are hazels, willows, yarrow, echinacea, brown-eyed Susan, goldenrod and sunflowers. Single flowers are generally preferable to pollinators although double flowered poppies appear a satisfactory food source. Leave a patch of stinging nettles, if you are fortunate enough to have them, they are an important food plant for many caterpillar species, including red admirals, mourning cloaks and Milbert's tortoiseshells. Dill, fennel and our native lomatiums such as springgold (*Lomatium utriculatum*) and desert parsley (*L. nudicaule*) are food plants for the anise swallowtail larva.

Environmentalist and naturalist, Sylvia Pincott co-authored the Naturescape B. C. Stewardship Series of publications, founded Abbotsford Backyard Habitat program and has been recognized

for her efforts with a 1996 Minister's Environmental Award. She has been honoured with the Sylvia Pincott Garden on the Trethewey House Heritage Site . For a fascinating article on galls that Pincott authored for the Compost Education Centre go to:

www.compost.bc.ca/serv/newsletters/newslet_07_winter.pdf

NP SG

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.

SCHEDULE OF SPEAKERS

October 20 2005

Hans Roemer Presentation
on native alpine flowers from
Vancouver Island

7:00 pm Room D116
MacLaurin Building, UVic.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND NEWS

UPCOMING OUTINGS & EVENTS

(* denotes Sierra Club, all others are VNHS)

Sept 17 & 18 Butterfly Count, Contact James Miskelly for information 477-0490

Sept 17-Oct 10 Goldstream Park Nature House Artshow 9-4:30 478-9414

***Sept. 25** - 10am Forest Politics Justin Calof speaks on how the government makes decisions about British Columbia's forests while exploring Dean Park. Meet in the main parking lot off Dean Park Road. By donation. For more details visit www.sierraclub.ca/bc.

Tues Sept 30 Botany Night Plants of Georgia and the Caucasus 7:30 pm at Swan Lake Nature House

Sunday Sept 25 All day field trip to Jordan River bogs. Meet at Helmcken Park and Ride at 9 am Contact Agnes at 721-0634

Monday Sept 26 A Trophic Cascade: The Role of Salmon and Bears in Forests by Dr Tom Reimchen. If you missed his presentation to NPSG, don't miss this one, it's absolutely enthralling. 7:30 pm Rm 157 Fraser Building, UVic

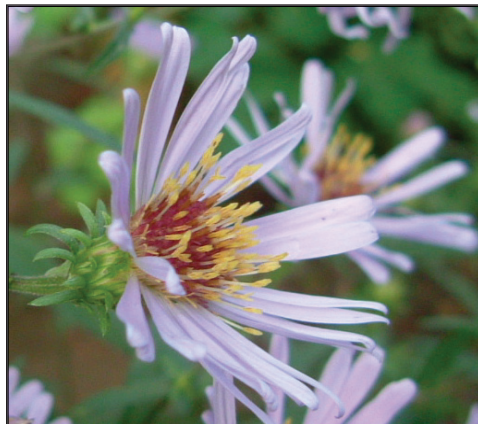
Wed Sept 28 High Seas to High Sierra: Birds and Botany of Baja California, presented by Bryan Gates. 7:30 pm Rm 159 Fraser Building, UVic

Sunday Oct 2 Mosses and Lichens in Thetis Lake Park with Gerry Ansell. 10 am at main parking lot. Contact Agnes at 721-0634

Thurs Oct 11 The Geology of Southern Vancouver Island with Chris Yorath. 7:30 pm Rm 159 in Fraser Building, UVic

Sunday Oct 16 Beacon Hill Park Trees and Birds with Agnes Lynn. Meet at main parking lot near playground at 8 am. Contact Agnes at 721-0634

Sunday Oct 16 Support Goldstream 5 km Salmon Run. Contact Nature House at 478-9414



ASTER

Tues Oct 18 Wilhelm Suksdorf and his Falcon Valley, learn more about Vancouver Island rare plants. 7:30 pm at Swan Lake Nature House

March 3 to 5, 2006 Rounding the Rim – Plants from the Pacific Rim 31st Western Winter Study Weekend Not till March 2006, but sounds very interesting:. Hosted by VIRAGS Vancouver Island Rock & Alpine Garden Society www.islandnet.com/~voltaire Registrar Claire Hughes 388-6595 Email Enquiries John Veillette ua024@victoria.tc.ca

GOMP 2005 FALL VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

September 26, 27, 28 International Society for Arboriculture (ISA) Conference staff GORP display - tba

Sunday, October 2 Mahon Brook 10-12 blackberry, mulching oaks

Sunday, October 16 Feltham 10-12 ivy & blackberry

Saturday, Oct 22 Camas Park 10-12 blackberry & ivy

Sunday, Oct 23 Wetherby Park 10-12 ivy & blackberry & replanting

Saturday, Oct 29 Mount Tolmie 10-12 blackberry, ivy & broom

Saturday, Nov. 5 Camas Park 10-12 blackberry & ivy, replanting

Sunday, Nov. 6 Mount Douglas Summit 10-12 broom & replanting

Saturday, Nov. 12 Little Mount Douglas 10-12 broom seedlings

Sunday, Nov. 13 Feltham 10-12 ivy, blackberry & daphne

Saturday, Nov. 26 Chatterton Hill 10-12 blackberry, mulching trail

Saturday, Dec. 10 Mahon Brook 10-12 sheet mulching

The Land Conservancy (TLC) has a list of volunteer opportunities from painting to gardening that can be found on their website: www.conservancy.bc.ca Contact Sheila at 250-479-8053 or admin@conservancy.bc.ca.

NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

JULY EXECUTIVE MEETING

The July meeting was well attended and all the positions were filled.

Discussions revolved around strategies to entice and retain membership, which has declined. It has been decided that most meetings will have a new format, with less emphasis on outings and information that can be found in the newsletter. There will be a 5 minute member presentation and Pat Johnson has volunteered to speak on her experiences as a native plant gardening teacher. There will also be a 10 minute public discussion period that will focus on issues relevant to native plants and no doubt these discussions will (peaceably!) spill over into the coffee break. Please consider how you can contribute to this exciting, new dynamic.

Communications was seen as another tool to recruit new members and ideas were considered to further this goal. Valerie Elliott, of iD2 Communications, has volunteered her time and expertise to design a website for the Native Plant Study Group and we look forward to "googleing" NPSG in the near future!

BOOKS

I haven't read these books yet, but am hoping to get a call from the library soon that they are available.

An Inordinate Fondness for Beetles (Henry Holt Reference Book)

By Arthur V. Evans, Charles L. Bellamy and Lisa Charles Watson (Photographer)
Amazing photographs and descriptions of beetles.

Out of Eden by Alan Burdick, also reviewed in New York Times

This book is described by Reed Business Information as a "thought provoking account on the ecology of invasions". From brown tree snakes to mollusks in bilge water, do we humans ever understand the consequences of our actions? This might make for some sleepless nights.

Urban Biodiversity-Exploring Natural Habitat and its Value in Cities by Don Hauka, also reviewed in Menziesia

Greeniology: How to live well, be green and make a difference.

By Tanya Ha

Are you frustrated at the lack of accessible green guide books that aren't imports from either the US or UK? Look no further! The Canadian edition of Greeniology contains practical advice tailor-made to be locally relevant In Canada. The book also contains a 'Further Information' section with useful Canadian contacts and resources.

Table of Contents - Canadian edition **Part 1: Welcome to the Green House**

Keys to a greener house, The green kitchen, The green living room, The green bathroom, The green laundry, The green bedroom The green office, The green garage, The green garden

Part 2: Lifestyle

Green building & renovating, Green shopping, Green grooming
How to have a green baby

Part 3: Hot Topics

What's up with the planet?

Epilogue: A step further

2005 NPSG FINANCIAL STATEMENT July 1, 2004-June 30, 2005

Carried forward	2806.50
Income	1455.83
Expenses	1208.79
Balance	247.04
Total	3053.54

RELATED ORGANIZATIONS

Two very informative and associated organizations that deserve our support and recognition are the Victoria Natural History Society and the Native Plant Society of British Columbia. Both produce edifying and fascinating newsletters and work towards public education and appreciation and conservation of native plants and their habitats.

The VNHS has a mandate which includes flora and fauna. Contact VNHS through Claudia Copley at 250-479-6622 or www.vicnhs.bc.ca

NPSBC has a more specialized focus on native plants. Contact NPSBC through Ross Waddell at 604-255-5719 or www.npsbc.org/

Asters & Pearly Everlasting

Our choices in late summer native flowering plants are quite limited. Most of our forbs flower in a glorious rush through spring and then lay dormant, conserving their energies through our drought ridden summers.

What a great pleasure it is then to see the purple bursts of colour provided by our local asters (*Aster subspicatus* and *A. foliaceus*), often lining ditches or in slightly moist, sunny areas and the clouds of white pearly everlasting (*Anaphalis margaritacea*), quite happily rambling along roadsides or through disturbed fields.

These plants supply much needed nectar to late season butterflies and other pollinating insects. Patches of each in my yard have recently been frequented by woodland skippers, mylitta crescents and purplish copper butterflies as well as a diversity of bees and other flying insects.

Both of these plants spread aggressively through their rhizomatous roots, so they should be planted in sunny areas where they have room to spread. Although the asters I have growing along the north wall of my house have flowered profusely, they are rarely visited by their pollinating friends, which seem to prefer warmer and sunnier locations.



White-top aster (*Aster curtus*) is a provincially red-listed plant that occurs in only a few locations in our area and is considered globally threatened. To say it is an unprepossessing plant is to be kind. It is conservative with its flowering parts and a patch I found recently had only 4 flowerheads in a patch that occupies an 8 x 10 ft. area, with many, many short, leafy stems. The sparse, white flowers are poor cousins to their purple and yellow relatives and their leaves have a sandpaper-like texture that makes them easier to identify. The ones I found are growing in close association with shore pine (*Pinus contorta*), Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), arbutus (*Arbutus menziesii*), manzanita (*Arctostaphylos columbiana*), kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), long-stoloned sedge (*Carex inops*), California oatgrass (*Danthonia californica*), false box (*Paxistima myrsinites*) and the ubiquitous broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) on a sunny, dry hillside. Apparently the populations on Mill Hill and Little Saanich Mt are suffering from broom infestations and deer herbivory.

If you are out hiking, look for all the activity taking place on our asters and pearly everlasting, it's worth a moments study.

NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP NOTES

SEPTEMBER 2005