

RUBUS SPECTABILIS  
DOUBLE-FLOWERED  
SALMONBERRY

## NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

## HOW NATURAL IS NATURAL? BY KRISTEN HARRISON

Our Native Plant Study Group seems to be a recent manifestation of a long term historical practice on the Northwest Coast. Thanks to Dr. Nancy Turner's many years of dedicated study and writing about First Nations plant use in British Columbia we can put our own current practices into historical perspective. The accepted and simplified picture of First Nations peoples as hunters and gatherers who made no deliberate modification to vegetation patterns is oversimplified and a distortion of the way things were then and are now.

.....Having occupied British Columbia for at least 12,000 years, there are both historical and contemporary examples from all areas of the province of people "borrowing a root." "Borrowing a root" is a term derived from a quote by Mildred Wilson (Gitga'at; Hartley Bay) who said "Someone should go and adopt a root from that plant." [to bring it to Hartley Bay] while speaking of yellow-fruited Red Elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa* f. *xanthocarpa*). Contrary to past beliefs, not only were plants of great importance to First Nations (over 300 species of plants utilized by

Northwest Coast peoples) but they also acted as stewards and managers of plant resources and habitats while utilizing a variety of techniques to enhance the productivity of local plant resources. This makes sense when one thinks of the longevity and success of Northwest Coast peoples in a challenging and diverse province like British Columbia with unevenly distributed resources.

..... During her talk Nancy provided numerous examples of these occurrences. For example, First Nations transplanted berry bushes for their enjoyment of the fruit. Such records exist for species like Salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*), Blue Elderberry (*Sambucus cerulea*), Stink Current (*Ribes bracteosum*), Soapberry (*Shepherdia canadensis*), Blackcap Raspberry (*Rubus leucodermis*), and other *Rubus* and *Vaccinium* spp. Some plants like Devil's Club (*Oplopanax horridum*) and Wild lily-of-the-valley (*Maianthemum dilatatum*) were transplanted for medicinal purposes. An account from Hesquiaht elder Alice Paul [ca. 1974] says that before her time people had transplanted *Camassia* bulbs behind her village from the Victoria

# NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

FEBRUARY 2009

area because they were highly prized but not found locally. Also, Margaret and Steven Siwallace of Bella Coola are credited with introducing Springbank clover to the Kitlope Valley from Kimsquit (ca. 1925). Some species were introduced through gift giving. For example, Cottonwood seedlings (*Populus balsamifera* ssp. *trichocarpa*) were presented to Heiltsuk chiefs of Bella Bella by Nuxalk hosts as potlatch gifts and populations of these trees are currently growing in several places in Bella Bella.

..... Transplanting is just one example of land stewardship. Modifications to the landscape can also be done through routine digging, soil cultivation, pruning, cutting back, burning, weeding and clearing as evidenced through historical accounts of First Nations practices.

“When they used to burn that grass above timberline they used to say the Indian potatoes were as big as your fist. Now they are only that big [like marbles], ‘cause they are not cultivated. They would burn every five or six years. The ground can only support so much...” (Baptiste Ritchie, Pemberton Lil’wat, Mount Currie, ca. 1968).

..... As we re-evaluate the historical land-use practices of First Nations on the Pacific Northwest Coast a number of exciting ecological questions arise. How were plant species distributions altered by humans historically? How extensive was this phenomenon? Over what distance were plant species moved and did these colonize into new populations? We have a lot to learn from the past.

Deur, Douglas & Turner, Nancy J. (eds.) (2005) *Keeping It Living, Traditions of Plant Use and Cultivation on the Northwest Coast of North America*. Vancouver: UBC Press and Seattle: University of Washington Press.



## NPSG SPEAKER SCHEDULE

Unless otherwise noted all meetings are held in room D 116 MacLaurin Building, UVic at 7 pm.

### March 19 Planning for Butterflies in Gardening and Restoration

James Miskelly completed his Masters degree at UVic, researching two rare species of butterflies. Butterfly populations of many species are diminishing on Southern Vancouver Island; providing butterfly habitat while creating gardens or in restoration work

is important to their continued existence.

### April 16 “Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary: A Refresher Course in Conservation Imagination”

Rare species, native plant gardens and the changes that have occurred and are occurring at this destination nature sanctuary.

June Pretzer joined the Nature Sanctuary staff in April, 2008. June, a graduate of the Restoration of Natural Systems program at UVic., has a real passion for restoring and preserving the ecosystem within the Nature Sanctuary.

### May 21 Member’s Night Presentations

Moralea Milne and Camas Hill

Pat Johnston and Native Plant Gardening

UVic parking policy--pay parking is in effect 24 hours a day. You must purchase a \$2 parking permit for the evening.

The NPSG gratefully acknowledges the support of the RNS program at UVic in securing the use of the rooms and facilities.

# NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

FEBRUARY 2009

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- The Anti-ivy League of Cadboro Bay is fighting an ongoing battle. Is your warrior spirit ready to tackle the soul-sucking expanse of this pernicious weed? Contact Agnes at 721-0634 or thelynns at shaw.ca for more info.
- Hospital Rock: Contact Agnes as above
- Volunteer at Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary For further details contact Joan at 479-0211 or email volunteer@swanlake.bc.ca.
- Beacon Hill Park Ivy Pull, Saturdays (except long weekends), 9 am-Noon southeast woods near Cook and Dallas. Bring gardening gloves. No dogs. Volunteers welcomed. Call Cornelia, 920-3556 or kacy at islandnet.com .
- Oak Bay Native Plant Garden meet every Fri. morning from 9-11, weather permitting. Corner of Beach Drive and Margate Avenue. New members welcome. Guided walks in March and April.
- Brighton Avenue Walkway Restoration. Removal of invasives and re-planting of native species in a Garry Oak rocky outcrop situation. Work each Sun. 9:30 - 11:30. Meet at Hampshire and Brighton, 2 blocks south of Oak Bay Ave.
- Garry Oak Restoration Project If you would like to volunteer with restoration of these Saanich parks, please contact Jen Eastman at ferns1 at telus.net All times are 9:30-11:30 am. on Saturdays. Gloves and equipment provided as well as juice and snacks.

Mar 7 at Chatterton Hill

April 4 at Wetherby

- The Haliburton Wetland Restoration Team is looking for native shrubs to use in hedgerows at the farm. Contact Kristen at 598-6546 or kristenh at uvic.ca

*The Native Plant Study Group meets on the third Thursday of the month from Sept through May, except Dec, at 7 pm at the MacLaurin Building, UVic. Please join us. Membership fees are \$15.00 annually or a \$2.00 charge for drop-in. Check the Room Schedule for new meeting locations.*



## EVENTS AND OUTINGS

CRD Parks: [www.crd.bc.ca/parks](http://www.crd.bc.ca/parks)

South Vancouver Island Mycological Society:  
[www.svims.ca](http://www.svims.ca)

Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Society:  
[www.virags.ca](http://www.virags.ca)

Swan Lake & Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary:  
[www.swanlake.bc.ca](http://www.swanlake.bc.ca)

Victoria Natural History Society: [www.vicnhs.bc.ca](http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca)

Native Plant Society of BC: [www.npsbc.org](http://www.npsbc.org)

Sat Feb 21 CRD Parks 1-2:30 East Sooke Park. Learn about local First Nations' Coastal Culture. Meet at Alyard farm Parking lot off Beecher Bay Rd off East Sooke Rd.

Sat Feb 21 Seedy Saturday

Hosted by the James Bay Market Society, Victoria Conference Centre 10 am -4 pm, 720 Douglas Street, \$7 under 12 free. Info: 250.385.0485.

Keynote presentations by Frank Morton (Wild Garden Seeds) and Thomas Hobbs (Southlands Nursery)

Sat 21 CRD Parks 1-2:30 pm

Learn more about First Nations coastal culture. Walk to the petroglyphs along the scenic Coast Trail and discover the story in stone. Wear sturdy shoes. Meet

# NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

FEBRUARY 2009

at the kiosk in the Aylard Farm parking lot off Beecher Bay Road.

Sat March 7 CRD Parks 1-3:30

If you've never hiked to the summit of Mount Wells, here is your opportunity. Early spring wildflowers such as Satin-Flower, Spring Gold and Blue-Eyed Mary will likely be putting on a show. The trail to the summit is steep and uneven in places. Wear sturdy footwear, bring water and dress for the weather. Meet at the information kiosk in the parking lot off Humpback Road.

Tues March 24 VIRAGS  
Linda Verbeek - Western Alpines  
Doors open at 7 p.m. at Gordon Head United Church Hall, 4201 Tyndall, Victoria B.C.

Sun March 29 CRD Parks 10-noon and 1:30-3:30

It's spring wildflower time, and Mill Hill boasts a riot of colour. Here's your chance to learn the identities of beautiful blooms and hear interesting plant lore. Come and see new spring growth where Scotch Broom was recently removed.

Meet at the information kiosk in the parking lot off Atkins Avenue.

April 18 and 19

Swan Lake-Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary 10-3  
Native plant sale and gardening workshops. Come to buy or learn or volunteer to help out. Admission price is \$3/day, \$5 for weekend pass. Phone 250-479-0211 for more information.

April 30 - May 3 BC Nature Conference & AGM  
The spring conference and annual general meeting will be in Duncan this year; hosted by the Cowichan Valley Naturalists. Registration information will be posted on their website ([bcnature.ca/index.html](http://bcnature.ca/index.html)). Field trips and presentations focused on the region make these events a terrific opportunity to learn about an area.



July 16 - July 18 Botany BC  
In 2009 Botany BC will be centered out of Muncho Lake in the northeast corner of BC. Further information about registration and the program will be found, as it becomes available (Feb/Mar '09), on the Botanical Electronic News website at:  
[www.ou.edu/cas/botany-microben/](http://www.ou.edu/cas/botany-microben/)

## NEW BLOG

We've been having some fun with Broom lately and I've started a Broom Blog.

By Karyn Woodland:

In house, sensible  
On ice, indispensable  
Meadows, reprehensible

Broom Cheer:  
Broom-chuck-a-lot-of-broom!

By Herbert Moore:

Amazing Broom  
How green its bush  
For greens like us to see  
Amazing Broom  
How long we'll push  
To sweep our meadows free  
<http://broombanter.blogspot.com>

# NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

FEBRUARY 2009

## MOSES ON ROOFTOPS

By W B Schofield

Reprinted from Volume 4 Number 3

Fall 1973 Davidsonia

Mosses are opportunists. Whenever a suitable site becomes available, they invade it and persist until crowded out or forcibly removed. Since readily available moisture and nutrients are the main requirements of mosses, the humid coast of British Columbia provides ideal conditions for their growth and development.

It is not surprising, then, that mosses occupy rooftops. The presence of shade trees nearby to keep the roof persistently moist even when rain is not falling, coupled with a rain of ash from a fireplace chimney, provides superlative conditions for moss growth. The only requisites that remain are a suitable substrate for establishment, and the arrival of the moss. Most types of shingle will permit mosses to become established, especially as the shingles become older. Thus composition shingles, asbestos shingles and wooden shingles all provide a favourable site. A metallic roof inhibits moss colonization and heavily tar-impregnated roofing will not permit mosses to colonize so long as the surface is smooth. In the latter case, however, in any joints and crevices where wind-borne fragments (plus moisture and nutrient minerals) can accumulate, a moss can establish itself and expand its colonies outward from such initial populations.

Mosses usually first occupy sites on the shingles directly above the eaves on detritus that has accumulated in the eaves trough, valleys or other depressions on the roof. Mosses tend to thrive well in the winter, when moisture is abundant and illumination and temperatures are low. During the summer these same mosses may remain dormant much of the time, either through desiccation or as a result of the natural cycle of growth in these plants.

In winter or spring most of these mosses produce fruiting bodies. *Dicranoweisia cirrhata*, an extremely common moss of roofs, produces its fruiting bodies in winter and they mature and shed their millions of spores to the wind. This same moss also produces

minute vegetative reproductive bodies, called gemmae. These, too, occur in great abundance and can be wind-blown to new sites. This moss is also common on roadside tree-trunks. It is this moss that often outlines the margins of composition shingles with narrow velvety turfs.

In the winter, too, the moss *Ceratodon purpureus* produces reddish spears that will become mature fruiting bodies in the spring. Dense colonies of these spears give a reddish pink flush to the vivid greenery of the turfs of moss. Some species of *Bryum* often grow associated with the *Ceratodon* and add to the colour.

Variant colours of green and a change in texture are produced by the various species of *Racomitrium* that can become established on rooftops. *Racomitrium lanuginosum*, when dry, forms grayish rounded cushions, whereas *R. canescens* is whitish yellow in the same state. *Racomitrium heterostichum* usually forms darker, smaller tufts. When moist, these mosses produce patches of grayish green (*R. lanuginosum*, *R. heterostichum*) or bright yellow-green (*R. canescens*). Finally, *Tortula ruralis* and *T. princeps* can form almost pure dense colonies on shaded rooftops, particularly garages where trees overhang, providing shade with associated persistence of moisture, and also an abundance of nutrients from rainwash through the leafy canopy.

These mosses enhance the beauty of a roof by contributing a richness of variable colours and textures. In other countries, as in Japan, they also flourish on thatched roofs. Naturally, opportunists from the indigenous flora are involved, but the resultant rich textures and interplay of colours are similar.

So far as I know, there has never been an attempt to exploit this natural enhancement of the beauty of a roof. The main problem would be to guarantee that the presence of the moss would not aid in the deterioration of the roof. Under normal conditions the expansion of the moss colony can result in pushing up the edges of the shingles, particularly if they are composition shingles. In wooden shingles, however, if a roof begins to leak, it is unlikely to be caused by the moss, but results from natural deterioration of the roof whether or not the moss is present.

# NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

FEBRUARY 2009

Davidsonia Editors' note: Additional information concerning common mosses occurring in British Columbia can be found in a recent publication by Dr. Schofield entitled: 'Some Common Mosses of British Columbia'. This useful guide was published in 1969 as Handbook No. 28 by The British Columbia Provincial Museum with illustrations by Patricia Drukker-Brammall.

*I have been given many boxes of old magazines such as Davidsonia (published by the Botanical Garden of UBC), Wildflower, Nature and many more. Most if not all of these are now defunct and it seems a shame that these marvelous old articles should remain buried and forgotten. When possible, I will incorporate them into the NPSG*

## NOTES

### 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 dependent on approval of the steering committee or, where indicated, by the at-large membership. Activities requiring funding must receive approval by the general membership.

**Co-Chair:** Valerie Elliott  
**Co-Chair:** Nathalie Dechaine  
**Speakers:** Moralea Milne  
**Treasurer:** Joan Varley  
**Newsletter:** Moralea Milne  
**Plant Rescue:** Todd Doherty  
**Field Trips:** Jean Forrest  
Pat Johnston  
**Membership:** Agnes Lynn  
**Publicity:** Valerie Elliott  
**Room Set-up:** Pat & Wayne Robertson  
**Plant Raffle:** Heather Pass  
**List-serve:** Linda Beare & John Olafson  
**Refreshments:** Pat McMahon  
**VHS Liaison:** Heather Pass

Native Plant Study Group members are required to become members of the Victoria Horticultural Society. Fees are \$25.00/yr and help pay for insurance to cover field trips. Send \$ to Box 5081 Stn. B, Victoria, V8R 6N3