

Native Plant Study Group

January 2011

Bringing the Mountains into Urban Gardens

By: Hilary Stead

Paul Spriggs' great passions are mountain hiking and gardening. When he started to see rock garden plants in Victoria that he recognized from his mountain hikes, he got excited – he realized he could bring the mountains down to the urban gardens.

For Victorians getting a glimpse of the native plants of this region, means keeping things at sea level. There, the Garry oak (*Quercus garryana*) and Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) ecosystems that would have been here prior to colonization are still discernible. Like many rock gardeners, Paul reaches further and brings in plants not just from the sea coast but from other extreme habitats that are home to good rockery plants, like mountains, desert and summer drought environments.

Rock garden plants are typically dwarfed in stature because of the harsh conditions in which they grow. In his November talk to the Victoria Native Plant Study Group, most of the slides that Paul shared were of plants native to Vancouver Island, with a few favourites added from further afield. There are quite a lot of plants native to Vancouver Island that are suitable for rockeries. The hands-down best in his view is sedum (stonecrop). It is drought tolerant, grows easily in rocks, in sun or shade, requires zero maintenance, is evergreen and spreads nicely.

Paul also recommends what he calls the three 'A's of native rock gardens: *Armeria maritima* (sea thrift), *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* (kinnikinnick) and *Allium amplexans* (slimleaf onion). The latter is a favourite because it naturalizes so easily. *Allium acuminatum* (hooker's onion) is also a great choice.



Quercus garryana
Photo by Michael Wheatly



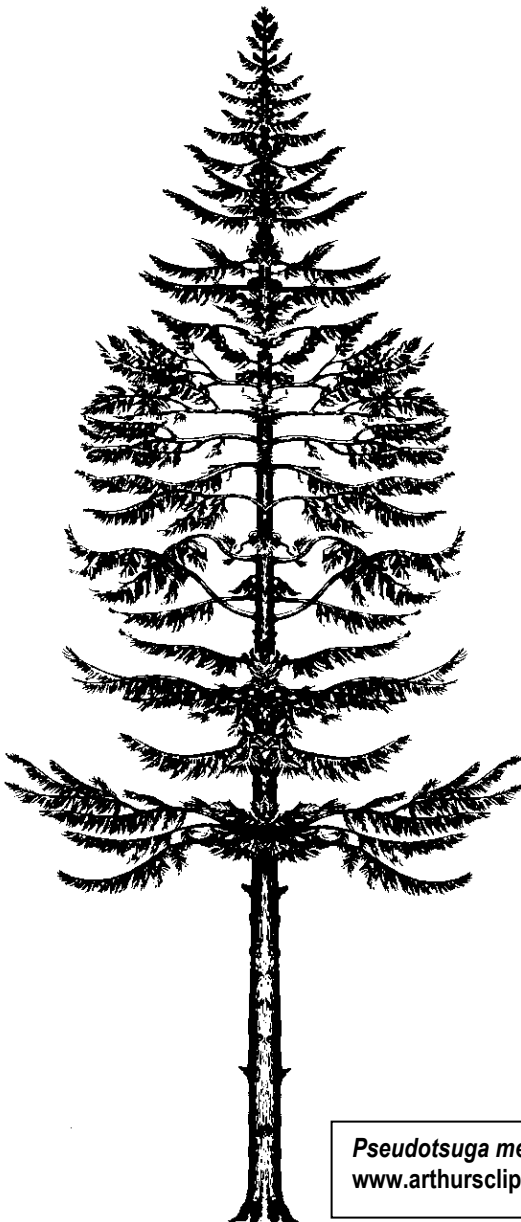
Bringing the Mountains into Urban Gardens cont'd from page 1

Many alpine and sub-alpine plants are easy to grow from cuttings or seed. Digging up alpine plants is pointless, and unethical. The key to success is perfect drainage and low nutrient soil, with 50 per cent gritty sand that allows the water to flow through it instantly. Some gardeners will create true alpine conditions by keeping the garden under glass since water kills the plants. In alpine meadows, foliage sits on rock, not soil, to avoid rotting.

Vancouver Island flora is not as diverse as its nearby neighbour, the Olympic Peninsula. Glaciation, the island isolation, and granite-type rock that does not decompose in the same way as the limestone-type rock of the Olympics, have together created significantly different conditions than on the Island. Paul calls the Olympics' Hurricane Ridge "nature's best rock garden". On the other hand, Vancouver Island's alpine and sub-alpine terrain has much to offer as well. For example, the amazing fall colour of the *Vacciniums* make it seem like "the ground is on fire."

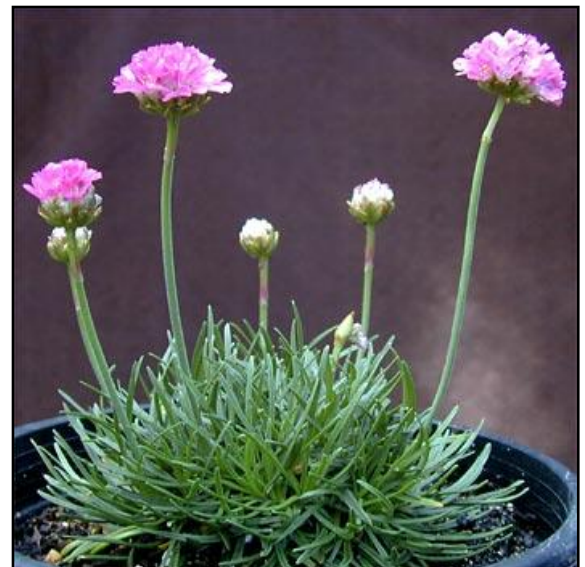
Paul recommends several great books for rock gardeners, including *The English Rock Garden*, by Reginald Farrer, published in 1919, the year before he died. It spawned the rock garden movement, and the creation of the British Columbia Alpine Plant Growers Society. It became the Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Garden Society, in 1921, making it possibly the oldest rock garden society in the world.

Other important resources are Lewis J. Clark's *Wild Flowers of the Pacific Northwest* and *Gardening with Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest* by Arthur Kruckeberg. Paul ended his talk with The 10 Commandments of the Flowers by Phyllis Munday (see pg. 3), and by playing Bruce Cockburn's *High Winds White Sky*.



Pseudotsuga menziesii
www.arthursclipart.org

Armeria maritime
www.plantsafari.com





COMMANDMENTS OF THE FLOWERS

by Phyllis Munday

1. Thou Shalt Learn To Know the Wild Flowers Of Thy Country
2. Thou Shalt Love and Cherish Them
3. Thou Shalt Consider the Places Where They Grow as Thy Great Garden, and Make it Thy Aim to Protect it.
4. Thou Shalt Gather no More Than Thou Can Use.
5. Thou Shalt Remember the Seed Time of the Other Year and the Joy of Others who are to Look Upon These Flowers
6. Thou Shalt Pass Along Thy Knowledge of Them That They May Find favour with the Careless Observer.
7. Thou Shalt Learn From Them the Grace of Line and Harmony of Colour.
8. Thou Shalt Consider Carefully how the Sun and the Rain and the Wind Join Hands in Completing their Beauty for thee.
9. Thou Shalt Preserve them in Thy Mind and in Thy Heart as a Great Lesson in Nature's Book
10. Thou Shalt Not Destroy but Shall Use Thy Knowledge to Bring two Blossoms in the Coming Year Where Last Year Counted one.

*For all VNHS events:
No pets please.
Bring a lunch and drinks
for the all-day outings.
Wear appropriate
attire and
footwear.*

Contact Agnes | 250-721-0634 |
thelynns(at)shaw.ca |
www.vicnhs.bc.ca



Allium amplexans
Photo by Nhu Nguyen



Volunteer Opportunities

Brodick/Bow Park

West of Univ. Heights shopping centre off of Cedar Hill Rd

Invasive species removal and site restoration. Training and tools provided.

Location & Time:

Schedule and location may vary every Mon. 10-12pm

Contact Judy Spearing | T: 250-472-0515 | jandd_spearing@shaw.ca | www.mountdouglaspark.ca/calendare.do

Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary:

3873 Swan Lake Road, Victoria

Swan Lake has a wide range of volunteer opportunities involving plants: nature interpretation, gardening with native plants, and removal of invasive plants.

Contact Robyn Burton T: 250-479-0211 | volunteer@swanlake.bc.ca

Glendale Gardens Native Plant Demonstration Garden:

505 Quayle Road, Saanich

Snow, rain or shine! Before coffee we work in the Western Woods restoration project and after coffee we work in the native garden. Volunteers welcome opportunities involving plants: nature interpretation, gardening with native plants, and removal of invasive plants.

Contact Robyn Burton T: 250-479-0211 | volunteer@swanlake.bc.ca

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505 Quayle Road, Saanich

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Time:

Every Wednesday morning

Contact | T: 250-658-5740

World Fisheries Trust

How to conduct a plant survey and establish a monitoring program

I am looking for people who could lead a group of volunteers through a training session on how to conduct a plant survey and establishing a monitoring program of the fairly recently (2007) daylighted Gorge Creek in Esquimalt Gorge Park This is part of a larger community monitoring effort that we are trying to build around the Gorge Waterway.

Contact Alicia Donaldson | 250.380.7585 | Alicia@worldfish.org



Arctostaphylos uva-ursi
Photo by Sten Porse

Native Plant Nurseries in Victoria

<p>Cannor Nurseries 4660 Elk Lake Drive 250-658-5415 www.cannor.com</p>	<p>GardenWorks- Colwood 1859 Island Highway 250-478-2078 www.gardenworks.ca</p>
<p>GardenWorks- Saanich 4290 Blenkinsop Rd 250-721-2140 www.gardenworks.ca</p>	<p>Island View Nursery (wholesale) 2933 McIntyre Road 250-544-4802</p>
<p>Lochside Nursery Lochside Drive 250-544-3100 www.csll.ca/lochside.html</p>	<p>Marigold Nurseries 7874 Lochside Drive 250-652-2342 www.marigoldnurseries.com</p>
<p>Thousand Summers Environmental Design 250-727-0229 thousandsummers@shaw.ca</p>	<p>Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary 250-479-0211 www.swanlake.bc.ca</p>
<p>Nature's Garden Seed Co. Victoria, BC V8P 5S2 250-595-2062 www.naturesgardenseed.com</p>	<p>Russell Nursery 1370 Wain Road 250-656-0384 www.russellnursery.com</p>

Nursery information found at:
<http://www.goert.ca>



Events and Outings

The Land Conservancy

Saturday, January 22

Tapping the Bigleaf Maple

The workshop starts indoors with a presentation on the ecology of maples, the process of sap flow and the tapping processes. We will then move outdoors to see tapped trees and to demonstrate tapping. The evaporator will be operating so you will see the process of making syrup. You will also learn other uses for sap, other than just for making syrup. We will also have some different things to taste. The event costs \$45 for TLC members and \$60 for non-TLC members.

Location & Time

Wildwood Ecoforest in Ladysmith from 10am-2pm

Contact Jay Rastogi | 250.816.1816 | jrastogi[at]conservancy.bc.ca

Environmental Science Advisory Committee (ESAC) for Canadian Forces Base Esquimalt

Thursday, February 3
Annual Workshop

The workshop consists of presentations on environmental research and collection activities conducted on CFB Esquimalt properties in 2010.

Some interesting topics scheduled include:

- The Western Bluebird Nestbox Program
- The Purple Martin Recovery Program
- The Rocky Point Bird Observatory
- The Mortuary Landscape of Vancouver Island

-An Historical Overview of ESAC

This is free event but pre-registration is required.

Location & Time

Pacific Forestry Centre from 9am-12

Gorge Waterway Initiative

Wednesday, February 9

Speakers Series

Join Nikki Wright, SeaChange Marine Conservation Society Executive Director, and Alicia Donaldson, UVic graduate student studying native oysters, in an evening of discovery as they reveal secrets of the eelgrass meadows of the Gorge Waterway, and the native Olympia oysters that inhabit this productive ecosystem. This is a free public event. Refreshments will be served.

Location & Time

Burnside Gorge Community Centre, 471 Cecelia Rd @ 730pm

Contact 250.360.3299 | www.gorgewaterway

Reoccurring Events

Victoria Natural History Society

Botany Night

3rd Tuesday of each month

Go to www.vicnhs.bc.ca to become a member and support our local Natural History Society!

Location & Time

Swan Lake Nature Centre at 7:30pm

Contact| Darren Copley| dccopley(at)telus.net| <http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca>

Rithet's Bog Conservation Society
Work Parties

1st Sunday of each month

Everyone is welcome at our monthly work parties as described on our web site.

The Rithets Bog Conservation Society is asking the nature loving public to



Allium acuminatum
Photo by Jennifer Ackerfield

show their tangible support for the bog by purchasing a \$10.00 tax deductible annual membership. For further information on our activities check our [website www.rithetsbog.org](http://www.rithetsbog.org)

Location & Time

Work parties are between 1pm-3pm, but meeting site varies, depending on the work we are undertaking.

Contact Karen Towne | ktowne[at]telus.net or Russ Pym | rpym[at]shaw.ca



FEBRUARY

Come for an Underwater Journey with Nikki Wright

Eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) is a great plant to get to know in the Capital Regional District and all along the BC coast, where mudflats or sandy beaches occur. The native species, *Zostera marina*, provides a nursery for fish, shellfish and hundreds of juvenile sea critters, as well as a feeding habitat for resident and migratory birds, such as the Brant goose.

Nikki Wright, Co-Chair of the province-wide Seagrass Conservation Working Group and ED of SeaChange Marine Conservation Society, will present information on eelgrass ecology and share images of this great seagrass to the Victoria Native Plant Study Group.



Zostera marina
Photo by Sharon Jeffery

NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP (NPSG)

(Sub-group of the registered non-profit Native Plant Society of British Columbia and is guided by a steering committee)

The NPSG 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. 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 T: 519-0404 co-chair@npsg.ca
Co-Chair:	Nathalie Dechaine
Speakers:	Hilary Stead
Treasurer:	Joan Varley
Newsletter:	Ilana Kronick Hilary Stead
Plant Salvage Coordinator:	Todd Doherty
Membership:	Agnes Lynn
Publicity:	Valerie Elliott
Room Set-up:	Pat & Wayne Robertson
Plant Draw:	Heather Pass
List-serve:	Linda Beare & John Olafson
Refreshments:	Pat McMahon
Archivist:	Brenda Pilon
Sustain Supporters Liaise:	Christine Nykiforuk
NPSBC Liaise:	Moralea Milne

Native Plant Study Group members are members of the Native Plant Society of BC.