

# Native Plant Study Group

April 2011

The April 2011 Issue of the  
Native Plant Study Group's Newsletter  
is dedicated to  
**Pat Boyle**

Written by Neil Boyle:

My wife Pat has had a nasty chronic disease for the last two years, and she did her best to function with it. She finally wore out, and died on 2 April.

My greatest comfort is the knowledge that my beloved wife  
is no longer suffering.

I am sending this to as many people as I can, but I have probably not included all who would be interested, so please feel free to share this with anyone you think would want to know.

Patricia Boyle's memorial service was held on Saturday 9 April at 2PM at McCall's Funeral Home, 1400 Vancouver Street, Victoria, BC.

At this celebration of her life, there was an opportunity for those who wished to say a few words, and a reception afterward to share more stories about Pat.

## First Nations Reconnecting with their Diet of the Past

by: Hilary Stead

When the creamy white ocean spray plumes burst open in June, the Wsanec (Saanich) people knew it was time to go to the Gulf Islands and fish for sockeye. When the flowers turned from white to brown, it meant that the deer were at their most fat and it was time to go hunting. Devil's Club (*Oplopanax horridus*) was a spiritually and medicinally important plant – a tea made from the inner bark of the stalk or the bark of the roots used to treat diabetes and a face paint made from the thorns used to scare bad spirits.

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### First Nations of Vancouver Island cont'd

At the March meeting of the Native Plant Study Group, Saanich and Ahousat ethnobotanist John-Bradley Williams told of a time when the First Nations of Vancouver Island were rich – they never had to worry about food or medicines or diseases. Together with Earl Claxton Jr., John-Bradley brought the native plants and traditional artifacts of the Saanich Peninsula into our classroom. We heard the flood story that brought the Wsanec, 'the emerging people', safely to Mt. Newton, where the welcoming arbutus became their sacred tree. And we learned about the 'end of the day' tea made from arbutus bark – it is not hallucinogenic, but it will give you the giggles.

John-Bradley focused his talk on five plants – ocean spray, salal, garry oak, nootka rose and flowering red currant. The wood of the ocean spray (*Holodiscus discolor*) is dense and hard, and gets stronger when it has been heated. A straight stem with a straight grain will split easily and can be used to clamp salmon for cooking on a fire or to carry clams, or to make camas digging sticks. John-Bradley brought along a salmon barbeque stick and a clam skewer, as well as a bracelet woven from cedar bark and a beautifully-carved 'talking feather' made from western red cedar (*Thuja plixcata*) in the design of the salmon and the eagle, showing the connection between the ocean and the air.

Salal (*Gaultheria shallon*) has always been an important plant for Vancouver Island's aboriginal people. It does not harm the plant to take whole strings of its abundant fruit – it just encourages more next year. When salal is in flower it becomes semi-carnivorous because its stem develops sticky hairs and captures and absorbs small insects. Salal stays green for a long time, so it was often carried and used to create a blind while hunting deer. The leaves are high in vitamin C and pectin and will suppress hunger if you are lost in the woods.

The showy flowers of *Ribes sanduineum*, flowering red currant, make it one of our most prized native shrubs, and a favourite of hummingbirds. The fruit is mildly sweet and combines well with thimbleberry (*Rubus parviflorus*), trailing blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*), huckleberry (*Vaccinium parvifolium*) and Saskatoon berry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*). Dried in bricks, the currants can be stored over winter and reconstituted by soaking overnight in water. Flowering red currant propagates easily. Just stick a stem in the ground and it will root.

A relaxing tea, rich in Vitamin C can be made from the rosehips of the nootka rose (*Rosa nurkana*). Many people are under the misconception that the red berry should be used, but it the brown part at the end of the berry that is the rosehip. The berries can be used to make jelly, but it is important to strain out the seeds which have tiny hairs. Eating the berries with their seeds is traditionally used as a medicine, to aggravate and eliminate worms in humans and dogs, but it's not pleasant and there is nothing relaxing about tea made with the berries.

The iconic garry oak (*Quercus garryana*) is ecologically important for camas (*Camassia quamash*), which needs the acidic soil created by the decaying oak leaves. The wood has many traditional uses. Ceremonial paddles carved from garry oak wood and attached to clothing will clang together, creating the sound of flowing water. The acorns can be roasted and eaten.

John-Bradley has been working with SeaChange Marine Conservation Society, teaching school groups about environmental issues, and is also involved in Feasting for Change, a group promoting the re-introduction of traditional foods and traditional methods of preparing food. "These plants that are so common, were and still are important plants to the First Nations."

Earl Claxton Jr. told us, "Our people have fallen away from the diet of the past." He and John-Bradley are trying to change that.



Oplopanax horridus  
Photo by Brian Klinkenberg

The Native Plant Study Group meets on the third Thursday of the month from September through May at the MacLaurin Building, UVic.

Please join us!  
The NPSG gratefully acknowledges the support of the Restoration of Natural Systems (RNS) program at UVic in securing the use of the rooms and facilities.

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

Save yourself the trouble of riding your bike or taking the bus!

<http://www.bctransit.com/regions/vic/>

## Volunteer Opportunities

### Brodict/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\(at\)shaw.ca](mailto:jandd_spearing@shaw.ca) |

### Mt Douglas Park

Park restoration. Training and tools provided.

#### Location & Time:

Schedule and location may vary every Thursday and some Sundays each month at 10am

Contact Judy Spearing | T: 250- 472-0515 | [www.mountdouglaspark.ca/calendar.do](http://www.mountdouglaspark.ca/calendar.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\(at\)swanlake.bc.ca](mailto: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.

#### 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 | |T: 250.380.7585 | [Alicia\[at\]worldfish.org](mailto:Alicia[at]worldfish.org)

### Tod Inlet

Saturday, May 7  
Clearing out Invasive Species  
Come make a huge difference clearing out the blackberry, broad leaved pea vine and clematis from a site we hope to one day restore to an open forest (with plenty of native berry species) and Garry oak meadow (with plenty of edible bulbs) ecosystem mosaic.

#### Location & Time

Tod Inlet @ 10am- 1pm

Contact John Williams and Judith Arney of SeaChange Marine Conservation Society | T: 250 652-1662



## Events and Outings

David Suzuki Foundation  
The David Suzuki Foundation (DSF) wants you to send stories about how pollution or global warming has caused problems for life in your home country. DSF hopes to make a book of these stories so they can teach people that environmental problems are happening all around the world.

Contact Harpreet Johal  
[hjohal@davidsuzuki.org](mailto:hjohal@davidsuzuki.org).

### Uplands Park

Picnic  
Good Friday, April 22  
"Friends of Uplands Park" and the "Community Association of Oak Bay" invite you to bring your family, a picnic and listen to the music of "Ron Carter and the Bald Eagles".

#### Location & Time

Uplands Park at entrance to Cattle Point  
12-3:30 pm

### Open Garry Oak and Woodland Garden

Saturdays, April 30<sup>th</sup> and May 7<sup>th</sup>  
I will have an open native garden this year again. This is my third spring with this large native garden, which is now almost full. Weeding is getting much easier and I am mostly making minor adjustments, such as moving individual species to new spots where I think they may do better.

#### Location & Time

2646 Cranmore Road (close the Glen Lyon Private School) from 2-6pm

Continuing Studies at UVic  
Thursdays, May 12 to June 2 and Sundays, May 22, 29 and June 5

Birding for Beginners  
220 bird species are sighted on Vancouver Island each year; we essentially live in a bird watcher's paradise. We're bringing this fascinating course to help you have more fun correctly identifying our feathered friends, especially on the Saanich Peninsula. With James Clowater, BSc, a biologist who specializes in the behavioural ecology of birds.  
Lectures: Thursdays, May 12 to June 2: 10 am to noon  
Field Trips: Sundays, May 22, 29 and June 5 from 9 to 10:30 am

#### Location:

This course takes place in Sidney at the Mary Winspear Centre

Fee: \$130 plus \$15.60 HST  
Course Code: ASDL383 2011K E01

Contact | T: 250-472-4740 to register

### The Coastal Invasive Plant Committee

Thursday, May 19<sup>th</sup>  
The Coastal Invasive Plant Committee's Forum & AGM "Hands On" Field Tour- Please join us to learn about regional invasive plant issues & management. Share ideas and network with other stakeholders on Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands and Sunshine Coast. Lunch provided.

#### Location & Time:

Vancouver Island University (VIU) Deep Bay Field Station  
370 Crome Point Road, Deep Bay (just north of Bowser) from 10am-4pm

#### Contact

[info@coastalinvasiveplants.com](mailto:info@coastalinvasiveplants.com) for details.



Amelanchier alnifolia  
Photo by Allan Carson

## Beacon Hill Park Events

Saturday, April 23

Native Plants - Wildflower Walk in Beacon Hill Park

What's all the buzz about native plants? Learn why these water-wise, low maintenance plants are gaining in popularity, how and where they grow best, and how to care for them.

#### Location

Meet at the Beacon Hill Park Maintenance Yard (at the end of Nursery Road) and then head out for a tour of some native plants in the park. Free. Rain or shine. Registration is not required.





Vaccinium parvifolium  
Photo by David Ingram

Saturday, May 7

Learn How to Make Your Own Victoria Hanging Basket  
Create your own Victoria trademark hanging "sun" basket with the City of Victoria's expert greenhouse staff at this hands-on, two-hour workshop. \$90 fee includes all planting materials.

Time

10am- noon

Contact | T: 250.361.0732 to register

Reoccurring E vents

Victoria Natural History Society

**Botany Night**

3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month

Go to [www.vicnhs.bc.ca](http://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| Adolf Ceska | [aceska\(at\)telus.net](mailto:aceska(at)telus.net) | <http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca>

Rithet's Bog Conservation Society

Work Parties

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of each month

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

The Rithets Bog Conservation Society is asking the nature loving public to show their tangible support for the bog by purchasing a \$10 tax deductible annual membership.

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](mailto:ktowne[at]telus.net)

Or

Russ Pym | [rpym\[at\]shaw.ca](mailto:rpym[at]shaw.ca) | [www.rithetsbog.org](http://www.rithetsbog.org)

**Native Plant Nurseries in Victoria**

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

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

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](mailto:thelynns(at)shaw.ca) | [www.vicnhs.bc.ca](http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca)



**Do you have something you would  
like to see in the NPSG  
Newsletter?**

Please send submissions to Valerie Elliott at  
[elliott\[at\]iD2.ca](mailto:elliott[at]iD2.ca) no later than the second  
Thursday of each month.

## What's going on next month?

The Native Plant Study Group presents

Native Bees: Essential Pollinators for our Future

With entomologist Gordon Hutchings

A worldwide crisis in bee populations has made our native pollinators more important than ever. A resident of our region—they are resilient and fascinating. Come learn more at our next meeting, as Gordon shares his expertise, images and materials on how we can help preserve our natural environment.

Non-member drop-in fee: \$3. More info: <http://www.NPSG.ca>

### 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   <a href="mailto:co-chair@npsg.ca">co-chair@npsg.ca</a>
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.