



Our Backyard

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Summer 2008

A NEWSLETTER ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN SAANICH

Saanich Takes the "Pledge"

In celebration of Environment Week, the District of Saanich took the Pesticide Free Pledge. The Parks Department oversees most of the land care on Municipal property and in their 50th anniversary year Parks will implement the pledge at Municipal Hall, Recreation Centres and Boulevard Floral Displays. The 21 pesticide-free Saanich sites can be found at: <http://www.saanich.ca/resident/parks/index.html>.

The District of Saanich is joining the growing trend for Canadian municipalities to raise awareness and enact bylaws about the negative impacts of pesticide-use in our communities. Under the direction of Saanich Council, staff are beginning the process of drafting a bylaw

addressing non-essential pesticide use, allowing sufficient time for consultation before implementation. To stay informed of progress being made visit:

<http://webstage/resident/environment/pdfs/Pesticidealternatives.pdf>

Taking the Pledge and drafting the Pesticide-Use Reduction Bylaw will be priorities for both Saanich Parks and Recreation and Planning/Environmental Services for 2009.

As a resident of the region, you can join the momentum too. Join GAIA College at 6:00 pm, July 2nd 2008 at Saanich Municipal Hall, in the Council Chambers for a free workshop on Organic Garden Care. Learn how to work with natural



Rae Roer and Councillor Susan Brice Taking the Pledge at Saanich Municipal Hall

processes to create healthy, vibrant gardens (registration at the door).

You can also take the pledge on-line at: <http://www.crd.bc.ca/takethepledge/> or in person at the Municipal Hall (3rd floor, Planning Department) or at the Parks office at 1040 McKenzie Ave. Both these locations have lawn stakes ready for pick up if you have already taken the pledge!



An example of a Bat house

As the days get longer and warmer, our backyards become the stage for a familiar summer spectacle. Black streaks zip across a dusky sky, darting in and out of trees or sweeping low across a pond. Saanich is home to ten species of bats, the three most common being the Big Brown Bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*), the Little Brown Bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) and the Yuma Bat (*Myotis yumanensis*). These flighty, insectivorous mammals are often given a negative reputation but without bats our backyards would be an ecological nightmare!

BACKYARD BAT BASICS

Nicole Polet, Goldstream Nature House

So what's the attraction? Why do we want bats as a part of our backyard fauna? Bats are like nature's insecticide. A single Little Brown Bat can eat up to 600 insects in one hour, including our summer nemesis - the mosquito! Not only that, but many species of bat population are following a steady decline due to habitat loss. Providing bats with suitable habitat is essential. You can help attract bats to your backyard by keeping it natural with native plants and ponds. Bat houses are easy to build and can provide a whole colony of bats with a home. Being able to observe a bat colony in your backyard is a very fascinating and rewarding experience!



Yuma myotis

Get an even closer look at the amazing life of a bat this summer by visiting the Goldstream Nature House at Goldstream Provincial Park. Every summer the Nature House attic hosts a maternity colony of over one hundred female Yuma bats. Watch them up close on our live "bat cam" as they "hang out" in our attic; you may even witness a live birth!

For more information please visit www.naturehouse.ca or call the Goldstream Nature House at (250) 478-9414.



BACKYARD WEAPON AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

Norm Mogenson

The average distance that food on the average North American dinner table is transported is about 2400 kilometers (from source to your mouth). Given that we live on an island, the transport distances are even greater to this area. That means we release enormous amounts of CO₂ and use tons of energy to import food we could easily grow. We have the most favorable growing area in Canada for many crops, yet we don't value arable land as such.

Here is something you can do to combat climate change and create a healthier environment, yielding health-giving foodstuffs. Grow more fruits and vegetables in your own back yard or in allotment gardens. Apart from that, try to live on a 30 km diet (preferably less).

By the time you get this, you may think it is too late in the season for this action to start now, but it's not. Here are some things you can do now. As gardens need plenty of sunshine, locate the sunniest site on your property (doesn't have to be the back yard). Dig and turn the soil, ensuring you are not damaging ecologically sensitive areas. Add sand

if it has poor drainage and add in any finely chopped organic material you have access to. Plant fruit and berries if they are still available. Plant fall, winter and early spring crops on advice from an experienced gardener. You will be ready to grow your own food by next spring. Plan how to best preserve temporary surpluses of this food.

Remember, you are absolutely assured of organic produce when you grow it yourself.



4th Annual Festival and Sustainability Expo

The Organic Islands Festival is growing strong with more leading-edge exhibitors planned for this summer's 4th Annual Festival and Sustainability Expo coming July 5th and 6th, 2008.

It's easy being green. That's the message Deb Morse, Director of the Organic Islands Festival would like people on Vancouver Island to know. As more and more people are aware of the impact that individual choices can make on the environment, she is finding that businesses focusing on sustainable products and services are becoming more prevalent.

"It is a lot easier now to choose foods, health products, energy sources, even furniture that leave a smaller footprint," says Morse, the founder and programmer of the popular Victoria area event.

Each year we are finding more diverse exhibitors that bring a wealth of choices to people here on Vancouver Island. In addition to our new Sustainability Expo, exhibitors this year include eco furniture, organic pet food, solar energy providers, superfast garden composters, biodegradable plastics, and wild food demonstrations and recipes for a cool planet.

The festival takes place at Glendale Gardens and Woodland in Saanich, a beautiful setting where event visitors will enjoy musical entertainment, chef's demonstrations and tastings from local organic farms. Learn how to have a Pocket Market in your community and gain direct access to local food and products in your neighbourhood or have F.U.N. at the main stage with Carolyn Herriott engaging in a panel discussion on Farming in Urban Neighbourhoods. To find out more please visit: www.organicislands.ca.



Contact: Gerda Lattey
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Environmental Achievement Awards

*Mayor Frank Leonard and
Councillor Vicki Sanders
with Saanich's 2008
Environmental Achievement
Award Winners*



Commercial



Bob Boulter & Mayor Leonard

Individual Citizen

Winner: Judy Spearing

Judy has volunteered on several ecological restoration projects and has initiated two of her own; one in Mount Douglas Park and the other, in Bow, Brodick and Feltham Parks. She educates volunteers, students and neighbours about threats posed by invasive species and facilitates 1000's of hours of volunteer stewardship. In particular she has championed a multi-year approach to rid Mount Douglas of garlic mustard in order to protect native biodiversity in the region. Judy exemplifies education, action and advocacy to preserve biodiversity in our municipality. In her spare time she researches, attends workshops and events to educate herself. Judy is an outstanding community volunteer.

Honorable mention: John Jungen



Judy Spearing and John Jungen

Volunteer Organization



Dave Lock & Paul Gareau

Winner: Mount Tolmie Conservancy Association

The Mount Tolmie Conservancy Association (MTCA) is deserving of an award for the achievements of its members in protecting and restoring the Garry oak habitat in the park. Two members in particular, Dave Lock and Paul Gareau, were singled out for nominations. Both have been involved for years with the group, pulling broom and other invasive plants and teaching native plant identification. The MTCA deserves recognition for the positive contribution they have made to this special Saanich Park.

Winner: Carmanah Technologies
Carmanah Technologies is putting solar energy to work world-wide. Carmanah's innovative solar technology significantly reduces or eliminates on-grid energy use, incorporates clean, green renewable energy, and operates reliably year round in the most extreme conditions with little or no maintenance. Eight pairs of Carmanah's solar-powered crosswalk beacons were recently installed throughout the District of Saanich. Carmanah's solar technology includes a range of solar-powered roadway lighting applications from solar-power pedestrian crosswalk and 24-hour flashing beacons, to programmable solar school-zone flashers and stand-alone power sources for Intelligent Transportation Systems equipment. With no trenching or cabling required, Carmanah's grid-independent solar-powered traffic equipment can be installed and operated with little or no environmental impact.

Youth Group/School



Reynolds Student, Heather Coey & Mayor Leonard

Winner: Heather Coey-Reynolds Green Group

Heather is a teacher at Reynolds Secondary and runs the Reynolds Secondary Green Group, an environment-focused extension of Leadership Victoria. She has organized many activities and awareness raising campaigns. The group arranged for Pacific Mobile Depots to bring their plastics recycling operation there every 4th Saturday, and ran a campaign to encourage staff and students to reduce, reuse and recycle. In conjunction with Leadership Victoria they have launched the Reynolds Green Spaces Project, an extensive multi-year restoration and greening project on the school grounds.

Biodiversity



Michael Meagher & Hal Gibbard

Winner: The Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society

The Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society (GOMPS) has been advocating for the protection of Garry oak habitat throughout the region, with an emphasis

on Saanich, since 1992. They provide planning input, scientific knowledge and expertise, public education, outreach and support to related local causes and organizations. GOMPS has been lobbying for the protection of Garry oaks and their associated species longer than any other group in Canada and has been vital in increasing the recognition and understanding of the ecological values of Garry oak habitat throughout the region.

Long-term Environmental Achievement

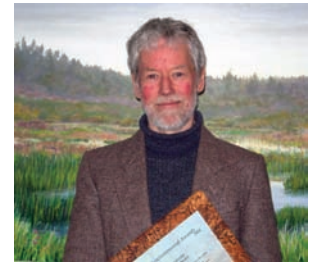


Pam Sinclair & Mayor Leonard

Winner: Pam Sinclair

Pam has been a tireless volunteer in Saanich for over a decade. She originally approached Saanich Parks for permission to remove the invasive species next to where she lives in the natural area in Playfair Park. Her work has transformed the area to the rich biodiversity it once was. Pam always sought permission in advance of the work, recruited other volunteers very successfully and stacked the brush piles neatly for the Parks department to pickup. Pam has always made herself available for many other restoration events.

Sustainability Award



Guy Dauncey

Winner: Guy Dauncey

Guy Dauncey is a speaker, author, and organizer who works to develop a positive vision of a sustainable future, and to translate that vision into action. He is author of the award-winning book *Stormy Weather: 101 Solutions to Global Climate Change*; *Cancer: 101 Solutions to a Preventable Epidemic*, and 9 other titles. He is President of the BC Sustainable Energy Association, Co-chair of Prevent Cancer Now, Executive Director of The Solutions Project, and Publisher of *EcoNews*, a monthly newsletter that promotes the vision of a sustainable Vancouver Island.

Congratulations to the winners and many thanks to all our dedicated volunteers, citizens & companies that help to improve the natural environment in Saanich.





Junior Master Gardeners

Play in the Plants Gardening Camps

Jane Tice, Glendale Gardens & Woodland

Glendale Garden's Play in the Plants Gardening Camps use the philosophy and techniques developed for the Junior Master Gardener © program, a comprehensive and dynamic program designed to educate children about horticulture, health, nutrition, environmental science, leadership and life skills using fun and creative activities.

During weeklong camps, children aged 7-10 learn about gardening basics while exploring the natural and cultivated areas of the Glendale Gardens. Gardening projects and crafts, outdoor experiments, games and walks highlight

each day. Children engage in group and individual learning experiences that promote a love of gardening, develop an appreciation for the environment and cultivate the mind.

Two camps are scheduled for the summer of 2008 from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon: one from July 14th to 18th and the second from August 18th to 22nd.

For more details on the camps and all the Glendale Garden programs please visit: www.hcp.bc.ca, call 479-6162 or email: info@hcp.bc.ca

It is never too early to introduce children to the natural world and to the backyard garden. Using whatever space may be available, from the yard to containers on balconies and decks, teaching a child where food comes from and how to grow it can lead to a lifetime of healthy eating.



Red flags are raised by Yellow Flag Iris!

Wendy Tyrrell, Coordinator for the CIPC



The Coastal Invasive Plant Committee (CIPC) maintains a high priority list for invasive plants and yellow flag iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) is on it! Yellow flag iris (YFI) is a perennial herb in the iris family native to the UK, Western Asia, North Africa and the Mediterranean. YFI grows to 1-1.5 meters tall, with slender fleshy leaves, yellow flowers and thick rhizomes (roots) that form dense mats up to 30 cm deep. It grows in fertile, low-lying wetland habitats including lakes, ponds, ditches and marshes. While it is an attractive plant, it is now widely established throughout North America and has recently been found growing in two areas within Saanich.

YFI is on the CIPC's High Priority List because it negatively impacts natural wetland habitats and wildlife and is very difficult to eradicate once established. YFI is dispersed by broken rhizomes and by seeds; only a small sliver of rhizome is needed to create a new plant. YFI seedpods are buoyant and can remain afloat for up to 7 months, which means they can spread down watercourses very long distances. This aggressive iris spreads and forms dense stands, out-competing native wetland plants and reducing access for wildlife to the water source. Very few native wildlife species can utilize this plant as a food source or for habitat.

If you have correctly identified YFI and would like to manage it on your property, begin by removing flower heads before they go to seed and eliminating seed pods. You can dig up the entire plant, including the rhizomes which are very deep into the soil. Waiting until the water levels drop (June/July) provides easier access to this root system. For larger populations, cut the plants down, to a few inches, and then excavate all the rhizome clumps. Unfortunately, excavation may require heavy machinery, which can cause severe damage to the soil and bank and could exacerbate the issue. Follow up treatment annually by pulling or hoeing new seedlings. To dispose of YFI, it is best to bag seed pods and flowers and throw them in the garbage. The leaves can be composted and the rhizomes only if they are first completely dried out in the sun away from any moist site.

NOTE: ALL PARTS OF THIS PLANT ARE POISONOUS, WEAR GLOVES!

There are many ornamental irises that are not invasive and can be found at local nurseries. Even better, plant native species like: Beachhead Iris (*Iris setosa*), Skunk Cabbage (*Lysichiton americanum*) or Cattail (*Typha latifolia*).

For a copy of the CIPC Priority Species List, or if you believe that you have found YFI growing in the wild, please report it to the CIPC by calling our weed hotline at 250-857-2472. To find out more information about invasive plants in your region, visit our website at: www.coastalinvasiveplants.com, or email the CIPC Coordinator at: info@coastalinvasiveplants.com.



Yellow flag iris bloom

For full schedules and program details, please contact the appropriate agency directly



Swan Lake/Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary

Families, join us for a variety of nature programs during July and August to experience the Nature Sanctuary's natural world and its inhabitants. For schedules, prices and booking information, call 479-0211 or visit:

www.swanlake.bc.ca

Day Camps: Biology Buddies—4 to 6 yrs,
Junior Nature Explorers—7 to 10 yrs,
Parent/Child Programs—4 to 6 yrs

Special Events:

- Breakfast on the Hill – July 2
- Reptile Day – July 10
- Night Creatures – July 11, Aug 8
- Animal Grossology – July 24
- Family Christmas Hill walk – July 29
- Sunset Singles Stroll – Aug 15
- Damsels and Dragons – Aug 14



SUNDAY MORNING GUIDED HIKES

FREE guided hike along an amazing BC Parks trail every Sunday this summer from 10:00 am until 12:00 pm! For more information please see our website at: www.naturehouse.ca or call (250) 478-9414.

Submissions and subscriptions can be sent to the editor:
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Call for submissions

A juried public art exhibition titled "WATER" will be at the Gallery Café in the Cedar Hill Recreation Centre from August 26 to September 28, 2008.

"WATER" A two-dimensional juried exhibition that explores human relationships with water.

For submission information please contact: Diane Thorpe, Community Arts Specialist 475-5557 or diane.thorpe@saanich.ca.

Deadline for submission is **JULY 20, 2008**.

RiverSong: Celebrating Life Along the Colquitz

RiverSong has been building community bridges for the past two years in support of Cuthbert Holmes Park and the Colquitz River. Here are some upcoming opportunities for June and July. All are welcome to take part. Free.

Song Circle There is one more scheduled Song Circle workshop, June 25, at Colquitz Middle School – 6:30-8:30 pm. Learn the songs and join in the singing.

July 5 Gorge on Art - Meet at Victoria Canoe and Kayak Club, 355 Gorge Road West, where we will launch in canoes and sing along the waters edge from 11:00 am – 12:00pm.

For further information, please contact Carolyn Knight cjdknight@shaw.ca

Or Paula Jardine mrspaula@telus.net

Free workshops: Organic Garden and Lawn Care

- Tues., June 24 - Organic Gardening, 6-9 pm Esquimalt Municipal Hall, 1229 Esquimalt Rd
 - Sat., June 28 - Organic Gardening, 9-12 pm Metchosin Municipal Hall, 4450 Happy Valley Rd
 - Sat., June 28 - Organic Lawn Care, 1-4 pm Esquimalt Municipal Hall, 1229 Esquimalt Rd
 - Wed., July 2 - Organic Gardening, 6-9 pm Saanich Municipal Hall, 770 Vernon Ave
 - Sat., July 5 - Organic Gardening, 1-4 pm Salt Spring Island, Community Gospel Chapel, 147 Vesuvius Bay Rd
 - Sat., July 19 - Organic Lawn Care, 1-4 pm Salt Spring Island, Community Gospel Chapel, 147 Vesuvius Bay Rd
 - Wed., Sept. 24 - Organic Lawn Care, 6-9 pm Saanich Municipal Hall, 770 Vernon Ave
- Victoria and Central Saanich workshops: to be announced.

Registration at the Door

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