Re-freshing Forgotten Fellowships: Appreciating Plants of our Past and Present

Humans are but one thread in the web of life. As we get to know how diversely entwined we can be with individual native plants, how humbling it is to consider the vast complexity of each one with its innumerable wild neighbours.

(Patricia Thomson, Executive Director)

In 2000, when the Stanley Park causeway was expanded, a marshland on the northeast corner of Lost Lagoon was included as part of construction constraints. In an effort to control heavy metal run-off from vehicle emissions, specific plants were introduced that would filter, contain, and clean the water body. The tall and stately curtain of cattail (*Typha latifolia*) is one of the most noticeable 'weeds' working hard to the benefit of fish, fowl, and other foliage. Additionally, thick leaves provide nest cover for birds like the red-winged blackbird which uses the stalks as perching staffs. In wilderness areas, moose enjoy browsing the young shoots, while cattail rhizomes are a food source for muskrats and geese.

**Cattails Closer to Home**

On your next round of the Lagoon, give one of the cattail’s 9-ft long lance-like leaves a soft handshake in appreciation, for this wild plant has more connections to our community than a cat has lives: historically, their leaves have been used as caulking in cabins, in bedding, and baskets. Cattail-caned chairs have also been known to survive a century of use. The brown flower spikes of Fall make a delightful accent in flower arrangements (coat with hair spray or varnish to avoid explosions of downy seeds!) Soaked in kerosene or diesel, they will burn as torches for about a half hour. The down provides tinder for starting fires but can also be used as insulating material for gloves, socks, and stuffing for a wilderness pillow and children’s toys. First Nations used the down for diaper material, cradle boards, and dressings for wounds. During World War I, the down was popularly used as filling in life preservers and insulation for quilts.

The cattail is also the supermarket of the swamp. While all native plants are protected from picking within Stanley Park, it is food for thought to know that the core of fresh stalks, called Cossack asparagus, are edible raw, pickled or cooked. The velvety green flower spikes can be roasted to gnaw on like cobs, while the pollen that clusters above in brilliant orange caps can be captured to tastefully replace up to one half of flour in muffins or pancakes. In *Edible Native Plants of the Rocky Mountains*, author H.D. Harrington suggests that the dried flower arrangements (coat with hair spray or varnish to avoid explosions of downy seeds!) Soaked in kerosene or diesel, they will burn as torches for about a half hour. The down provides tinder for starting fires but can also be used as insulating material for gloves, socks, and stuffing for a wilderness pillow and children’s toys. First Nations used the down for diaper material, cradle boards, and dressings for wounds. During World War I, the down was popularly used as filling in life preservers and insulation for quilts.

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“The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness.” — John Muir

continued...
rootstalks of one acre of cattails would yield over three tons of nutritious flour.

Elevating Elders

Across the Park in moist areas and clearings, as Spring melds into Summer, so too do the white flower pyramids of the tall red elder shrub (Sambucusracemosa) transform into brilliant bead-like clusters to help insects and birds: its blossoms are heavily used by pollinating insects; its berries, an important food source for robins. Red elder shrubs, like cattails, have been diversely entrenched within human communities. In Medieval times, elder was associated with devils and witches; planting a shrub near the house or using the wood for cradles was considered taboo. Yet elders later became tied to good fortune: with powers to repel evil spirits and lightning, cattlemen traditionally rode with elder switches to insure safety to their herds, while old-time hearse drivers held elder-handled coach whips to ward off banshees. Dairies, during cheese-making, were adorned with odorous elder branches hung on walls to repel flies. Today, sprigs can similarly be worn in one’s hair to discourage mosquitoes.

One needs to be cautious against the red elder’s seeds, leaves, bark, and inner pith of its stems due to its toxic cyanide-producing glycosides. When prepared properly, however, one can enjoy its flowers infused as a cold or warm drink, or as a deep-fried battered, crispy treat. Its fruit is also a great choice for jams, pies, and vinegar flavouring when cooked and strained. Elder blossom infusions have been favoured for eyewashes, footbaths and freckle-faders, and various carefully-prepared concoctions of its leaves and roots have been touted as skin salves and poultices.

Whole books have been written on individual plants native to Stanley Park. For starters, I recommend:

a) Plants of Coastal British Columbia, by Pojar and Mackinnon eds, Lone Pine Press, 1994;
b) Cedar, by Hilary Stewart, Douglas & McIntyre, 1984;

Native Plant Salvaging - A Partnership Between Lands

As the 2010 Olympics approach, more and more forested areas in the Greater Vancouver region are being designated for development. In an effort to increase housing opportunities, a considerable amount of native flora and fauna is being destroyed. The Stanley Park Ecology Society (SPES) has launched a program that aims to rescue native plants prior to construction and transport them into restored areas within Stanley Park.

When a forested area is scheduled to be urbanized, it has 2 offerings for its sister forests – much sought after native vegetation and increased genetic diversity. As invasive plant species such as English Ivy and English Holly continue to take over much of the Greater Vancouver area’s green spaces, native vegetation is quickly becoming a hot commodity. By transporting plants that are already destined for eradication into protected areas, we will be importing fresh genetic material and restoring native plant dominance within the forest. In return for these precious gifts, the accommodating forest provides a stable new home for the displaced vegetation.

Within Stanley Park, the objective of our Native Plant Salvage Program (NPSP) is to complement our already widely successful project – Ivy Busters. Ivy Busters is a stewardship initiative that addresses invasive plant infestations within Stanley Park. When an invasive plant species such as English Ivy is introduced, it spreads rapidly, compromises natural food sources and shelter for wildlife and turns lush, diverse rainforests to sterile ivy deserts. In order to slow and eventually eliminate this process, SPES coordinates events where volunteers manually remove this destructive plant and facilitate native regeneration. The NPSP promises to enhance ecosystem restoration following ivy removal, as establishment is often the most challenging stage of seedling development.

In order for a forest to be healthy and resilient it must be rich in biodiversity with access to a large gene pool from which it might derive new DNA. As Stanley Park is completely isolated from other intact forest ecosystems, its inhabitants face the great dangers found when the course of natural selection is disturbed. Trees may become especially vulnerable to forest pests and disease, and both trees and ground vegetation may lose their ability to fight off infestations by alien invasive plant species. By importing matching native plants into the park from healthy forests off site, we will be enriching the genetic diversity of Stanley Park, thus increasing its long-term health and chance of survival.

Our first two expeditions to the mountains of West Vancouver permitted our most dedicated volunteers to rescue 72 native plants and one stunned salamander! The plants are now in place and being monitored and we’re hoping the salamander is enjoying its new home under some moss in the forests of Stanley Park.

As the success of the NPSP depends highly on soil moisture, our next rescue season will begin in late fall when the rainy season sets in.

Contact stewards@stanleyparkecology.ca or call (604) 718-6522 for more info. In the meantime, plenty of ivy removal is still required, so come on out to our next Ivy Pull and see the new forest that is growing under your feet!
Urban eagles are well in the process of establishing themselves as another unique element of the Vancouver experience, and amaze residents and visitors in their recent adaptations to city living. It is hard to imagine another city in North America of Vancouver's size hosting at least 15 active nest sites - 10 of which are close to the Downtown core. Eagles' nests are in forested sections of parks, above recreational sports fields, and in some cases, directly in trees in residential yards. In the middle of May, eaglets were documented in at least 8 of the nests and at least two had a pair of eaglets.

And what a glorious summer it’s going to be! Watch for our newly recruited and returning Eco Ranger volunteers who will roam the park in July and August on Tuesdays through Sundays. Volunteers will set out from the Nature House at 10:30 am to 6 pm to engage the public in various educational activities. Training for the Eco Ranger program begins the second weekend in June to learn West Coast Ecology and to develop public education and interpretation skills. You may also see some of them engage children with interpretive games and activities at the children’s water park, conduct mini discovery walks or operate displays at special events such as the fireworks, among others. You can identify these volunteers by their tan uniform vests with the ECO RANGER insignia, carrying maps, pamphlets, and interesting props. Feel free to approach them with any questions you have about Stanley Park’s history, its flora and fauna, or other programs Stanley Park Ecology Society has to offer.

For information, contact Noah O’Hara, Eco Ranger Coordinator at (604) 257-6909 or ecoranger@stanleyparkecology.ca
Discovery Walks

Venture into Stanley Park on a two-hour guided walking tour with a naturalist or local expert. Walk themes and leaders vary. Every Sunday at 1 pm. $8 public, $5 members/student.

Children’s Nature Story & Craft

Nature games, stories and crafts for 3- to 6-year-olds. A fun way to learn about local plants and animals! Last Saturday of each month at 11 am, Nature House. $5 per child, $2 per member; parents no charge.

Birding in Stanley Park

Join naturalist and bird watcher Cathy Aitchison for a 2-hour tour in Stanley Park to identify migratory and resident birds and learn bird watching skills. Last Sunday of every month at 9 am. By donation.

Programs above start at the Nature House located at the west foot of Alberni Street at Lagoon level.

Insects Rule Earth Ideal for families, kids (7-up) and everyone else looking for an entertaining afternoon. Join nature interpreter Andrew Scott to discover why Stanley Park would not exist without help from its insect population. Can you believe it? Check it out!

The Women of Stanley Park: 1850-1914

Ivy Busters

Hopping for Herps Frogs, salamanders, and even turtles abound around Beaver Lake in different life stages. Join Brent Matsuda in a search for Stanley Park’s lesser known small critters.

Celebrating National Aboriginal Day - Native Plants: Their Past & Current Uses Naturalist and artist Kirsty Robbins takes a look at the integral role native plants played in the culture of the northwest coast peoples and show resources for beginning a native plant garden.

Children’s Nature Story and Craft

Birding with Cathy Aitchison

Celebrating National Aboriginal Day - Plants and People of West Coast Temperate Rainforests Join naturalist Yona Sipos Randor for an introduction to historical and contemporary uses of plants from west coast temperate rainforests. Learn to recognize at least 5 species that can always come in handy!

Women and Water: A Historical Perspective Stroll the waterways of Stanley Park (Lost Lagoon, Coal Harbour and Second Beach) to hear fascinating stories about the remarkable women of our past with leader Jolene Cumming, as she examines women’s relationships to our local waters.

Ivy Busters

Walk on the Wildside of Stanley Park Interpreter Noah O’Hara leads this discovery tour to the fascinating Great Blue Heron colony, through mature forests, and rich wetlands. Watch for wildlife and an active eagles’ nest, and learn how West Coast First Nations peoples depended on the rainforest.

Look for this icon!

Discovery Walks

Ideal for ages 7-Up!

Entertaining afternoon with skilled nature interpreters! For Walk themes browse pages 4-5.

Historical Walking Tour

The Women of Stanley Park: 1850-1914

Join historical interpreter Jolene Cumming on this 2 hour tour. Explore the lives of both famous and forgotten women during this significant period. Hear stories of extraordinary lives and remarkable experiences of these women of diverse heritage.

Saturday Jun 10th & Aug 19th 1:00 pm-3:00 pm

Register at (604) 257-8544.

Cost $10 public/$8 SPES members.

Tour leaves and returns to the Stanley Park Dining Pavilion, across from Malkin Bowl. Rain or shine.
Fun Bug Walk on Canada Parks Day  
Ideal for families and kids and everyone looking for an entertaining afternoon. Discover with insect enthusiast Andrew Scott the ways in which these amazing animals create and maintain Stanley Park’s natural beauty.

Walk on the Wildside of Stanley Park  
Interpreter Noah O’Hara leads this discovery tour to the fascinating Great Blue Heron colony, through mature forests, and rich wetlands. Watch for wildlife and an active eagles’ nest, and learn how West Coast First Nations people depended on the rainforest.

Nature Story and Craft  
Fun Bug Walk in Beaver Lake  
Ideal for families, kids (7-up) and everyone else looking for an entertaining afternoon. Andrew Scott, with his unique interpretation style takes you on an exploration of the incredible creatures lurking in and around Beaver Lake.

Birding with Cathy Aitchison  
Connecting the Dots: Linking What We See & Hear in Nature  
Join Roy Jantzen on a nature walk that is designed to make you think about the connections we often don’t see on our walks through the forest.

Ivy Busters  
Walk on the Wildside of Stanley Park  
Interpreter Noah O’Hara leads this discovery tour to the fascinating Great Blue Heron colony, through mature forests, and rich wetlands. Watch for wildlife and an active eagles’ nest, and learn how West Coast First Nations people depended on the rainforest.

The Women of Stanley Park: 1850 - 1914  
SuperBugs Fun Walk  
Ideal for families, kids (7- up) and everyone else looking for an entertaining afternoon. From locust plagues to ant supercolonies, as humans fight insects for environmental control, do we risk catastrophe? Discover the superpowers of superbugs with insect enthusiast Andrew Scott.

Nature Story and Craft  
Walk on the Wildside of Stanley Park  
Interpreter Noah O’Hara leads this discovery tour to the fascinating Great Blue Heron colony, through mature forests, and rich wetlands. Watch for wildlife and an active eagles nest, and learn how West Coast First Nations people depended on the rainforest.

Birding with Caithy Aitchison  
Superbugs Fun Walk  
Ideal for families, kids (7-up) and everyone else looking for an entertaining afternoon. From high jumpers to deep divers- insects have some amazing abilities that will shock and amaze you! Andrew Scott, with his unique interpretation takes you to the fascinating insect world.

IVY BUSTERS  
Second Saturday of each month  
Stanley Park Needs your Help ~ Aliens are Taking Over!!!  
Come enjoy the beauty of Stanley Park on a summer morning and help us to remove alien invasive plants that are smothering native vegetation.  
Meet at the Stanley Park Dining Pavilion at 9:00 am sharp until noon. Please bring plenty of water and wear solid footwear. Don’t let showers dissuade you; we’ll be here rain or shine!

Summer Ivy Busters Events:  
Jun 10, Jul 8, Aug 12  
Spread the word... bring your family and friends; participants will receive discounts for our Discovery Walks.  
Parking passes and refreshments will be provided.  
Thank you for helping to preserve Stanley Park’s status as a wildlife sanctuary.  
We look forward to seeing you here...  
For more information, visit www.stanleyparkecology.ca or call (604) 718-6522

DISCOVER THE WILDSIDE  
OF STANLEY PARK  
CUSTOM TOURS  
We’ll design a customized nature walk or historical tour for your group. Just ask us!  
Bookings: 604.718.6522
**Freaks of Nature:**
**Insects as Environmental Architects**

“When all mankind were to disappear, the world would regenerate back to the rich state of equilibrium that existed ten thousand years ago. If insects were to vanish, the environment would collapse into chaos.” E.O. Wilson

When we look at our natural environment, it is easy to take what we see for granted. The world of trees, flowers, ants, and bees has always existed in its present configuration. In actuality, most seed bearing and flowering plants, as well as colonial insects like termites and ants are tremendously novel.

Three hundred million years ago, cycads, horsetails and palm trees were typical plant forms, while dragonflies 60 cm long were the dominant land predators. A feast of abundant insect life, including a proliferation of super sized cockroaches, allowed amphibians to spread rapidly when they began to invade Earth’s swamps and rivers. A succession of invaders led the way to our arrival as one of Earth’s current dominant lifeforms. We would not be here without the simpler creatures that have become food for more sophisticated predators. All life on Earth is interdependent.

The relationship between plants and pollinators is a symbiotic one. They serve each other. Seed bearing plants rely heavily on insects to reproduce. Many fruit bearing trees specifically target insects with colourful, sweet-smelling blossoms. Pollination is required for fruit to germinate. In exchange, the insects feed on sweet nectar. On a summer day in Stanley Park, pollinating insects are active throughout the forest, fields, and gardens and are a joy to observe.

Insects are largely responsible for the pollination of crops like corn and wheat. Even our livestock depend on grains as a primary food source. Without pollinators, world food stocks would dwindle rapidly. Yearly, output from crops like grain would decrease by one third. The political stresses of a starving global population would be very harmful to cultural development.

“...and view our new phenology wall map for Stanley Park! What a great way to get oriented to the Park and to learn about some of its natural events for the season. On July 29, the Nature House mascot, Harry the Heron, will also be inviting you to the official unveiling of the map.”

Newsflash

Koren Johnstone, Nature House Interpreter

**Native Garden Brochure!**

With summer around the corner, what a wonderful time to go to our garden to learn about native plants. A new coloured brochure on our native plant garden is now available at the Nature House. A brochure produced with the help of our talented volunteers, it provides information on some of the native species in the garden, and outlines advantages of incorporating native plants into your own gardens. So visit us at the Nature House - where we will be happy to provide you with a brochure for your self-guided tour through our garden of beautiful bunch berry, trilliums, and wild ginger!

The SPES native garden is part of the West End Residents Association Community Gardens and is situated at the foot of Robson Street next to the tennis courts.

**Nature House Wall Map Celebration Event!**

Come to the Nature House and view our new phenology wall map for Stanley Park! What a great way to get oriented to the Park and to learn about some of its natural events for the season. On July 29, the Nature House mascot, Harry the Heron, will also be inviting you to the official unveiling of the map.

**Stanley Park Book Launch!**

The Wall Map Celebration Event will be combined with the book launch of the Vancouver Natural History Society’s new book on Stanley Park, Wilderness on Your Doorstep, at the Nature House. Come for the party on July 29 from 1:00-4:30pm!
SPES Helps Start Regional Invasive Plant Organization

SPES has been working to control invasive plants in Stanley Park since May 2004. Over 800 volunteers have contributed to SPES’s invasive plant control efforts in the last two years. We have removed English Ivy but also English Holly and Himalayan Blackberry. But did you know SPES has been cooperating with other groups with similar interests? Our efforts are matched by other non-government organizations and government groups invaders across the Lower Mainland. But for a long time they did not know much about each other’s efforts.

In April 2005, SPES held “The Ivy Conversation”. We invited people, from all over the Lower Mainland, working to eradicate English Ivy to tell their stories and learn from each other. Its success led to an even bigger meeting in October where people interested in all of the plant invaders of the Lower Mainland gathered. The enthusiasm for more communication led to the creation of a new organization called the Greater Vancouver Invasive Plant Council or GVIPC.

GVIPC’s first official function was a public forum at Deer Lake Park in April where about 70 people discussed, learned, and shared new ideas about plant management, volunteer recruitment, challenges and merits of herbicides. The next forum is set for Fall 2006.

ACROSS
3 These red-breasted birds are known for their beautiful blue eggs and cheerful songs.
5 These animals with striped tails might seem to beg for food - but please don’t feed them!
7 Quack! You’ll see lots of these feathered friends paddling in ponds all over Stanley Park.
8 These creatures, often abandoned pets, enjoy basking in the sun at Lost Lagoon.
9 On a night hike, you might be surprised to find these flying near Beaver Lake.
10 Watch your fingers! If you look under a rock at low tide on Second Beach, you’ll find these!
12 Hundreds of these beautiful birds nest near the tennis courts in springtime. In summer, they hunt for fish with their long, sharp beaks. (3 words)

DOWN
1 In many First Nations legends, these black birds brought humans the first grains and vegetables. Even so, farmers now use straw men to scare them away from crops!
2 Stanley Park’s largest mammal is about the same size and shape as a medium-sized dog.
4 These birds soar in circles high above Stanley Park, and build huge nests in the Park’s trees! (2 words)
6 Sometimes black, sometimes brown, these furry friends chatter away in the trees.
11 Rrrribbit! If you hear a splash at the lake or lagoon, it might be one of these.

For the answers, email the Crossword Queen at school@stanleyparkecology.ca!
Capers Collaborates with SPES

Bolstered by kudos from SPES and other non-profit social and environmental organizations of Greater Vancouver, Capers Community Market, was recently honoured by Volunteer Vancouver with a much-deserved Caring Company Award.

With funds, people-power, profile and sustainability mission support, Capers allowed SPES to offer the first all-organic food services in the City’s parks by donating kernels and spring water to the Stanley Park Cob House concession. Spring 2006, Capers also contributed the first all-organic menu for all 18 sessions of SPES’ 2-day Urban Camping for Grade 5/6 students’ overnight stay in Stanley Park.

On June 7th, Capers staff will also remove invasive alien plants around Lost Lagoon as part of Adopt-an-Acre Ivy Busters. SPES also celebrates the grand opening of Capers Cam-bie store in the summer of 2006.

Wednesday, June 21st – Solstice Day
5% of Sales Special Event
All Day

All three Capers stores – Robson, Kits, and West Vancouver – will donate 5% of proceeds to SPES school and park programs. SPES staff will be at all locations.

Saturday, June 24th
Capers Wild Salmon Barbeque
Noon to mid-afternoon
Robson Store

Enjoy wild salmon on the grill. Your minimum $2 donation gives you salmon, organic salad, and refreshments, while supporting children’s programming through SPES. Make it a family outing!

Members Enjoy:
• Discounts on Discovery Walks, Family Programs and Events
• Seasonal activities calendar and our quarterly newsletter.
• Voting privileges to help SPES enact ecological stewardship in Stanley Park.
• Special perks & promotions from community partners.
• Free preview nights on Christmas Bright Nights and the Halloween Ghost Train

Membership Supports:
• School and Public Programs helping more than 20,000 children and adults to discover nature each year through hands-on stewardship adventures.
• The Lost Lagoon Nature House, Vancouver’s only ecological interpretive centre, welcoming over 15,000 visitors each year.
• Wildlife monitoring, habitat restoration and biodiversity conservation in Stanley Park.

Sponsors & Donors

Members & Supporters

For more information visit www.spes.ca or call 604 664 1267.

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