



"The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop away from you like the leaves of Autumn."

-John Muir

Fall-Winter is the high season for restoration activities in the GORP sites with broom to bash, ivy to pull, mulch to spread and native species to plant! On page 4 you will see a list of many upcoming events to get involved in. More events will be announced closer to Christmas for the new year. You can keep up-to-date on these events and more by registering as a volunteer or through the GORP website (www.gorpsaanich.com). Hope you can join us on-site this season!



Broad-leaved stonewort

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GO Restore!

Newsletter of the Garry Oak Restoration Project in Saanich

Fall/Winter 2004

ISSUE 3

The Rewards of Partnerships



Royal Oak Middle School

There are so many great opportunities to restore Garry oak ecosystems in Saanich – but it is not a simple task. The initial excitement of such a project can sometimes get bogged down in issues such as – how do we start? Who's going to help? Where will we get plant material? How should we deal with the invasive species? Organizations interested in taking on a project are often looking for partnerships to help them deal with these issues.

GORP began to take on partnership restoration sites very soon after it was formed. There is definitely an interest in restoration in the community and with it a need for support. GORP provides support and guidance to other organizations so that they can design and implement effective, long-term projects.

It has become apparent that there is one type of partnership in the highest demand in Saanich. There are many schools in our area with Garry oak ecosystem remnants on or beside the school grounds. The restoration of these areas is a wonderful opportunity to engage students in stewardship, green school-grounds and create outdoor "classrooms".

Organizations partnering with GORP are given guidance about how to get started and ideas for how to manage the project. GORP offers resources to these sites such as information sources, educational tools, help with signage and sometimes plant materials, equipment and volunteers when available. To date, GORP has assisted in training for volunteers or students on issues such as invasive species removal.

Taking on an ecological restoration project in an endangered ecosystem is not simple, but definitely rewarding. It takes long-term commitment and good planning. It is very important to make sure that any of the work that will be done will not impact any rare species or cause additional damage. The results of this careful work will not only be seen on the site, but may also impact the activities of landowners in the neighbourhood and the volunteers and families involved in the project.

Our current partners have done incredible work on many levels – on their sites, in their schools and in their communities. The rewards are endless and our hats are off to the committed folks out there who make these projects happen!



Strawberry Vale Elementary





Site Profile: Feltham Park

The Feltham Park GORP site is a narrow strip of Garry oak habitat along the north side of McKenzie Avenue by Braefoot and overpass. Fronting McKenzie Ave, it is surrounded by houses on the other sides and is an extension of the larger Feltham Park to the north. This remnant woodland provides important habitat and is a natural corridor connecting greenspace for flora and fauna.

This restoration site has many Garry oak trees (some dead and serving as wildlife trees) with thickets of Indian Plum (*Oemlaria cerasiformis*) through much of the understory. Though smaller native plants through the site have been choked out by invasive species such as ivy, a significant feature is the large population of Rein orchids (*Platanthera unalascensis*). The site was also heavily impacted by garbage before our stewardship efforts.



One of the big issues at Feltham Park has been an extensive infestation of English ivy (*Hedera helix*) on the trees and the ground. There are also two other invasive plants of concern - Daphne (*Daphne laureola*) and Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus discolor*).

During the past year there have been a number of workparties at this site, including an intensive week of ivy removal by Glenlyon Norfolk School and a number of GORP volunteer workparties. Thankfully, all the trees have now been freed of the stangling and about two-thirds of the ivy is off the ground. Some of the ivy taken off the trees was 4 to 6 inches in diameter! Already, baby Garry oak trees have started to grow where the ivy has been removed.

This past spring a group of volunteers; Site Steward, Peter Allen; his Mom, Elaine; Melissa Szytybel and Pat Johnston) rescued Rein orchids from a salvage site and transplanted them into the Rein orchid area. Next spring we will be watching carefully to see if the orchids have survived.

Feltham Park: on McKenzie Ave by the Braefoot overpass. Look for the large wooden sign [access off Arrow Rd]

Once the invasive plants on this site are more under control, the next major goal will be to bring in salvaged native plants appropriate to the site. One day soon we hope this lovely little area will look more like it once did - with a diverse array of native species providing habitat for birds, butterflies, beneficial insects – and enjoyed by people.



**Peter Allen
Feltham Park
Site Steward**

I am an artist inspired by nature, and one who has grown up under the influence of Oak. I found out about GORP by lookin' Garry up in the phone book. I phoned GOERT who put me in touch with GOMPS and finally I found myself talking to Pat [GORP Restoration Coordinator]. I reached out because of a desperate need I felt to save the sacred, and to learn about our cultural heritage landscape.

A year has passed, and I am getting to know Feltham more intimately. As it is screened by thick Snowberry and Indian Plum, you can't tell what lies beyond. Once inside, you feel surrounded by mystery and majesty. The centre is a rock outcrop covered in a patchwork of mosses, lichens and licorice ferns. This is my favourite sunset viewing place. In front of the outcrop is what I call "Rein Row", where the many rein orchids grow amongst the snowberry. To the left and right of the sunset rock are the many Oaks, now breathing easy and ivy free. An interesting feature of this site is the understory of old growth Indian Plum, that plays with the light so magically. Under the Plum, many of this years fat acorns are sending down taproots, and with Ivy and Daphne patrol as well as pruning some of the Indian plum, these Oaklings shall thrive.

As the traffic roars by I sit and dream of my life long plan to paint with the Oaks. My spirit roars back with folklore, myth, and the lightning of inspiration. Garry Oak; what a cool tree!



Feltham Canvas





Licorice fern *Polypodium glycyrrhiza*



Photo: Carolyn MacDonald

While we may be missing the spring-summer blooming season in Garry oak ecosystems at this time of year, we are consoled by the beautiful displays of re-appearing licorice ferns. During the warm, dry seasons the licorice fern, which is an “epiphyte”, dries up and disappears. An epiphyte is a “plant that derives moisture and nutrients from the air and rain; usually grows on another plant but is not parasitic on it”. So, with the grey, rainy weather we are able to enjoy bright green displays of licorice ferns emerging on moss covered logs, trees and rocks.

There are over 10,000 different species of ferns throughout the world. This particular species grows along coastal North America from the northern pacific coast of Alaska to northern California. They are found in rich, acidic, loam soils usually in partial to fully shaded areas.

First Nations were the first to use licorice fern for its medicinal uses, using it to treat colds and sore throats and also to mask the taste of other bitter medicines. The name of this fern reflects the licorice taste of the rhizomes. It is now used to treat a number of other ailments, including lung irritations, stomach and colon irritability and as an alternative to antihistamines (without the side effects, though it should not be used by pregnant women).

A number of GORP sites are worth a visit to enjoy the licorice ferns including Mt. Tolmie, Chatterton Hill Park and the lower slopes of Little Mt. Doug. It is also an easy plant to salvage from development sites. If you are interested in joining Saanich's Native Plant Salvage Program and the GORP salvage crew, please call our Restoration Coordinator, Pat Johnston (595-5600).



Introducing: Hal Gibbard...

If you are involved in conservation in our community, it is very likely you have met or heard of Hal Gibbard. Hal, a tireless volunteer for many community organizations, has been a member of the GORP steering committee since it started in 1999 as the representative of the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society (GOMPS). Hal brings to us his experience from his career as a biologist and Parks Planner and his current roles as President of GOMPS, a member of the Friends of Mt. Doug, the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team and local community associations (which, I'm sure, is not an exhaustive list).

Recently, Hal was an environment award recipient from the Saanich Environmental Awards. Hal is constant in his passion for conserving Garry oak ecosystems, including speaking out at municipal council meetings against development that would destroy Garry oak habitat. Hal can also be seen in places like Mt. Doug bashing broom with other volunteers.

Thank you Hal-for the contributions you have made and continue to make towards the protection and recovery of Garry oak ecosystems!





UPCOMING EVENTS

GORP EVENTS

Sunday, October 24th

Little Mt. Doug

(1-3 pm)

Workparty - removal of broom in the new areas and young resprouts

Saturday, November 6th

Camas Park

(11 am-1 pm)

Workparty - invasive species removal, including broom, ivy and blackberry

Sunday, November 7th

10th Anniversary of Tree Appreciation Day

(9am-12 noon)

A huge celebration to celebrate the 10th Anniversary! There will be tree planting throughout the site (including big trees!), displays, special demonstrations, and lots of fun at Cedar Hill Recreation Centre. GORP also needs volunteers to man a GORP table in the auditorium

Saturday, November 27th

Wetherby Park

(10 - 12 noon)

Workparty - spreading mulch under the oaks in the main area (and planting bulbs if available)

Sunday, November 28th

Mt. Tolmie Park

(1-3 pm)

Workparty - removal/control of invasives

Saturday, December 4th

Chatterton Hill Park

(10-12 noon)

Workparty - spreading of mulch and control of invasive species

Sunday, December 5th

Mahon Brook

(10-12 noon)

Workparty - mulching the site

Saturday, December 11th

Camas Park

(10-12 noon)

Workparty - spreading mulch in the lower meadow area

For all GORP Events, contact Pat Johnston, Restoration Coordinator for volunteer information at 595-5600 or patj@islandnet.com

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Sunday, October 31st

Wild Mushroom Show

(10 am to 4 pm)

A special presentation by the South Vancouver Island Mycological Society. Discover the world of the wacky and wonderful mushrooms of Vancouver Island. The huge variety found in our forests, fields and gardens will be on display. Bring your specimens for identification by members of the Mycological Society. Drop-in family program suitable for ages 6 and up. Donations are appreciated.



Nov 6th - Metchosin Hall

Nov 13th - Prospect Lake Hall
Musical HAT nights

In support of our regional "Habitat Acquisition Trust" a coffee house style evening with great music, food, raffle and fun. Doors open at 7 pm
Tickets \$15
call HAT at 995-2428



Volunteer with the Garry Oak Restoration Project!

Gear up for fall and plan to join GORP's volunteer crew. Most of the active restoration takes place in the fall and winter. Spring and summer are good for monitoring, inventories, education and pure enjoyment! For more information contact: Pat Johnston at 595-5600 or patj@islandnet.com

Submissions and questions can be sent to the Editor:

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