

The LEAFLET

The Newsletter of the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society

Spring 2014
Vol. 18 Issue 1

GOMPS



48 Years Ago Freeman King had an idea - we made it a reality

Dedicated Garry Oak Nursery to start in 2014
See full story page 3

1966

GARRY OAKS
By Freeman King

The Garry Oak is British Columbia's only native oak. It grows mainly on the east coast of Vancouver Island, but it is most abundant in the Victoria area. It does not grow north of Comox, but there are small groves at Sumas and at Yale on the mainland. It also grows in Washington and Oregon where it is called the Pacific Post Oak because it is extensively used as fence posts. The heart of the wood will last almost indefinitely but the soft sap wood rots when in contact with moisture. It is a very slow growing tree and very few of the acorns germinate. It is slowly disappearing from the landscape through indiscriminate cutting where buildings are being erected. This surely is a crime when with some thought and planning of an area this beautiful native oak can be saved. No matter where you see it it is rugged, strong and fascinating. Perhaps some enterprising nurseryman would do well to grow it as an ornamental tree and so save it from becoming a museum piece. Nature lovers should advocate its preservation and protection. Surely this means all members of the Victoria Natural History Society.

An excerpt from the 1966 Victoria Naturalist hinting at would come 47 years later ...

Thomas Walter Gillespie

June 22, 1945 - November 26, 2013: Founding Member and Treasurer GOMPS



Tom's love of nature was immense and he put his energy, thought, skill and time into a number of environmental organizations. In his very quiet and competent way, Tom made things happen. He acted as Bookkeeper, Secretary and Treasurer on boards, he banded birds, managed data, fixed equipment, sent out newsletters and managed memberships, to name just a few of the roles he played in these organizations. He was made an honorary life member of the Victoria Natural History Society (VNHS) and received an Acorn award from The Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team (GOERT). Tom was also closely involved with the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society, Rocky Point Bird Observatory (RPBO), The Friends of Ecological Reserves, and the BC Purple Martin Stewardship Recovery Program.

2014 Annual General Meeting

May 6 @ 7PM
Goward House



Guest Speaker
Dr. Richard Hebda
of the RBCM

Visit our website
for details!

"Tom was there at the start of Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society and the Friends of Ecological Reserves. He represents the best of the citizens of the coast ..."

- Briony Penn

These extracts are from a Memorial written by Alison Moran which was used at the Remembrance for Tom, hosted by the Pacific Forestry Centre. Our condolences go to Tom's son Burke, his grandson Kyle and his brothers John and Sandy.



Painting the Trees - A New Mural at Rogers Elementary School

When School District 61 Grounds Department staff removed the English ivy from the concrete walls at the front of Rogers Elementary School a parent took the opportunity to re-introduce a Garry oak meadow into the concrete jungle! Carolyn Richman has watched both of her children walk past the ivy covered walls and it motivated her to protect the nearby Christmas Hill, educate the school and create a sense of stewardship in the community. Her plan was to coordinate the painting of a mural to celebrate the Garry oak ecosystems which involved past and present students and staff.

Employed by Saanich Municipality, and also author of the Outreach and Public Involvement chapter of GOERT's Restoring BC's Garry Oak Ecosystems publication, Carolyn drew on all of her resources. Local artist Joanne Thomson designed the mural using all the natural elements of the surrounding Garry oak meadows and was assisted by former Rogers students Bryn MacDonald and Ryan McNeil, both now in their grade 12 year at Claremont High School. As the mural progressed every student at Rogers for the 2013 school year was given the opportunity to paint on the mural with parent volunteers assisting. GOMPS Directors were present for the official unveiling of the finished mural having provided a financial donation of \$1000 to purchase materials.

In conjunction with the mural's completion, recently retired teacher Mr. Yves Parizeau hosted a special Professional Development Day event for staff focusing on learning in the natural environment of the Garry oaks. Yves led staff on a guided tour of the Christmas Hill Garry oak ecosystem!

Please visit the school and experience this larger than life art exhibit – Rogers School is located in Saanich at 765 Rogers Avenue and can also be accessed through the trails of the Swan Lake/Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary.

Details about the mural's creation can be found on the Rogers Mural Project blog
rogersmuralproject.blogspot.com



Pictured above: Bryn MacDonald, Joanne Thomson, Tom Gillespie, Hal Gibbard, Rebecca Mersereau, Carolyn Richman, Michael Meagher, Maryanne Trofimuk, June Pretzer, Kelly Shera and Yves Parizeau

At Long Last, GOMPS' Nursery Project is Open for Business

by: Karen Wonders, GOMPS Director

Years of dedication and planning by the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society (since July 6, 2007) have come to fruition in 2014 with the opening of a nursery devoted to producing genetically local Garry oaks. Since its official founding in 1992, GOMPS has advocated for the preservation of Garry oak ecosystems and the protection and replacement, even proliferation, of Greater Victoria's flagship tree. The problem is especially urgent as large mature Garry oaks are disappearing faster than they can be replaced and this results in a dramatic age gap between the population of older surviving trees and the relatively few recently planted and thriving young ones. The goal of the Nursery Project is to produce Garry oak trees 6' to 7' tall, from locally collected acorns and to distribute these to municipalities, landowners, restoration projects and the general public. By planting these young trees, it is hoped that the unique Garry oak population will once again thrive and become sustainable.

Hal Gibbard, one of the original members of GOMPS, has acted as its most recent and long serving president. His education as a wildlife biologist and varied career in natural resource planning and management, gave him much of the expertise needed to be at the helm of GOMPS to initiate the Nursery Project and to see it through the many complex challenges that it faced. Hal's persistence was inspired by the admirable objective of providing healthy and affordable small trees to restock the rapidly vanishing indigenous habitat of the Garry oak. Thanks to his dedication, our descendants may be able to experience the splendour of alluring groves of Garry oaks and collect their acorns to plant for further generations.



Locally collected acorns are the key to the success of the GOMPS nursery

It is the GOMPS President's view that there are two major issues that converge to seriously threaten planet earth and, though they both have been recognized for a long time, little has been done. They are:

1. The human population has grown in numbers and consumption that has exceeded the "carrying capacity" of the planet to the extent that both land and sea "resources" are being rapidly depleted or destroyed;
2. The unbalancing of the world's carbon cycle to the extent that climate change is hugely sped up so that natural adaptation cannot keep up, thus losing many species. The "tipping points" are close.

As we cannot agree on how to solve these problems although there has been, and continues to be, obvious opportunities, the best that small numbers of people can do is concentrate on the most important local aspects of the larger problem. In terms of preserving species diversity, Garry oak ecosystems are the most important and most threatened in this part of our land.

The Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society has evolved from a gathering of people with a common concern for the disappearing ecosystem as a result of land use changes, through helping to formulate Urban Forest and Park plans, giving advice on the sort of protective laws required, enabling teaching, and drafting of guidelines for restoration. Although other organizations are doing more in some of these aspects, such as through purchasing or covenanting land for protection, GOMPS was the first and may have been the inspiration for the others to follow. We are now partners in two covenants.

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At Long Last, GOMPS' Nursery Project is Open for Business

by: Karen Wonders, GOMPS Director

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The final innovation is to insure that there is a sufficient supply of the native plants that can be found in the ecosystem, including the most difficult to grow in useful quantities; the flagship species, Garry oak trees. Smaller native plants are now available in some commercial nurseries and through other organizations. So, “--- here come the Garry oaks!” Experience has shown that the best survival is from planting young trees, of so-called “plant out size”, that can withstand the hazards of the current urban environment, and the only way to make these widely affordable is through volunteer labour.

“What remains for GOMPS to accomplish, is to convince all Municipalities and Regional Districts to get on board all stages of this movement now. It is a long voyage with only a short time left.”

- Harold (Hal) Gibbard, May, 2014

An Endangered Icon

The statuesque Garry oak, which can live well over 400 years, was once abundant in the dryer parts of Central and Southern Vancouver Island. Since colonization in the late 19th century, however, the number of these giant trees has been drastically reduced primarily due to the explosive increase in human population and its encroachment on their habitat. Young trees are especially vital for the preservation of the species and the creation of a diversity of ages among the trees, so no large gap is generated when the older ones die out. According to Hal Gibbard, the urgency of the present situation means that when existing mature Garry oaks fall, there will be a period of about a human generation before they are replaced. This problem is exacerbated by the extremely slow-growing nature of individuals belonging to this species.

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An Integral Part of Our Urban Forest

In recent years the important role of urban and community forests has become an issue of public concern. GOMPS has contributed to a programme that identifies and conserves trees and landscapes throughout the city, with particular attention being paid to remnant Garry oak ecosystems. The benefits of nurturing trees in the city include improved air quality by carbon absorption and oxygen production, energy conservation by providing shade, the control of water runoff, the lowering of noise levels, and an improvement in the aesthetic value of city parks and streets. Because the Garry oak is well adapted to drought and climate change, it is a highly prized candidate for urban tree plantings. GOMPS has advocated that urban forest management practices include tree protection bylaws. Individual significant trees, including those selected for size, age, or species need to be protected and maintained. Ideally these objectives could be incorporated into the planning and development process with a bylaw that will be upheld throughout the region. Thanks to GOMPS' early advocacy for the protection of Garry oak meadows and healthy ecosystems, many municipalities and regional districts have been engaged in their own legal protection and restoration activities. Other conservation measures include the planting of young trees, and the defining of “protected root zones” during construction activities.

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Garry Oak Growers Group (GOGG)

This Group is a committee whose original members were drawn from GOMPS: Hal Gibbard, Rob Hagel, Fred Hook, Mike Meagher, Tom Gillespie, Michael Croteau, Brenda Costanzo, and Conan Webb. Some members have necessarily left the GOGG, but now it includes staff from the core municipalities. Its specific task is to facilitate the non-profit production of Garry oak seedlings grown from locally collected acorns, and to offer these young trees to the general public, municipal governments and restoration projects. With the support of volunteers and their local expertise, the goal of GOGG is to produce approximately 1000 young trees per year over the lifetime of the Nursery Project. In addition, educational materials will be offered to help landowners take care of the trees and ensure their survival. GOMPS is using funding from two generous bequests of local estates to begin the operation of their non-profit Nursery.

Commercial tree nurseries cannot provide sufficient numbers of Garry oaks, in part because of the relatively long period of time (five to seven years) and the space and labour that is needed to maintain and nurse the slow growing seedlings until they are marketable. The GOMPS Nursery Project aims to produce a crop each year of seedlings that are grown until they are about six to seven years old for a cost considerably less than a commercial operation. Each year about 1,500 acorns will be collected and planted with the goal of producing about 1,000 seedlings that will then be transplanted into one-gallon pots. After two years these young trees will be transplanted into 30-litre pots where they will remain until sold.

Partnership with City of Victoria

GOMPS Nursery Project would not have been possible were it not for the cooperation of, and partnership with, the City of Victoria which has generously donated the use of a former nursery site, irrigation equipment and basic facilities such as a portable office and storage building. In return GOMPS will provide free of charge a percentage of the seedlings to the City of Victoria. Years of diligent and patient negotiation have resulted in a signed agreement between GOMPS and the City in February 2013. Thus GOMPS has succeeded in the first stage of its ambitious goal to organise a region-wide program for the production of local Garry oak trees, available to the public at an affordable price.

Need for Garry Oak Tree Nursery Volunteers

Those wishing to volunteer in our nursery need not be experts or have experience – we will offer training in tasks such as the re-potting of seedlings. If you are interested please contact:

Michael Croteau by email grow.oaks@gmail.com or
in writing c/o: GOMPS, 1439 Wende Road, Victoria, BC, V8P 3T7.

Volunteer Opportunity:

Treasurer

With the recent passing of our Tom Gillespie, GOMPS is without a Treasurer. Our Secretary, Mike Meagher, is doing double-duty to fill in the gap but GOMPS invites qualified volunteers to contact us if you are interested in volunteering as Treasurers. As we are a not-for-profit registered with Canada Revenue Agency, applicants should be familiar with current accounting practices and the tax laws of Canada/British Columbia.

Interested persons can contact GOMPS

1439 Wende Road, Victoria BC V8T 3P7 or by email **grow.oaks@gmail.com**



www.garryoak.info

Check out
our newly
redesigned
web site!

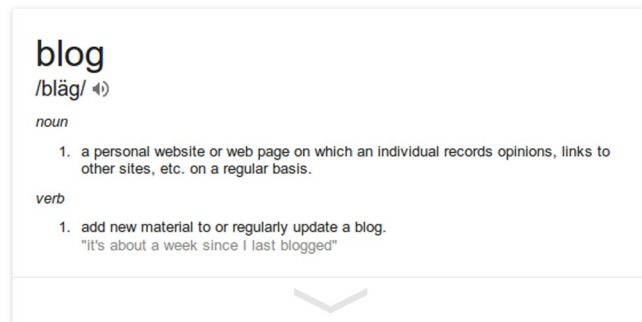
Special thanks to Fred Beinhauer
for renovating our site!



The Leaflet is a publication
of the Garry Oak Meadow
Preservation Society

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email: grow.oaks@gmail.com



For more stories and updates between
issues please see the "News" page
of our website.

Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society

1439 Wende Road, Victoria, BC V8P 3T7

Membership/Renewal

Mail this form with a cheque. Memberships
will be on a 12 month renewal. If you join in
October, your membership will be valid until
the end of October in the year following.

GOMPS

Membership & Donation Form

Name:

Address:

Phone:

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Membership Dues - Check One

☐ Individual \$15

☐ Family \$20

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