



**GARRY OAK MEADOW  
PRESERVATION SOCIETY**

## Welcome to our E-news

WINTER 2024

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*Photo by Ryan Senechal. Planting a few GOMPS oaks as part of a community event at the Braefoot stewardship area in Saanich, Nov 2022.*

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### **WHO WE ARE**

The Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society (GOMPS) formed in 1992 because local citizens were concerned that woodlands and meadows were rapidly disappearing as a result of expanding human habitation in the Capital Regional District. Our society is dedicated to the

preservation, protection and restoration of Garry oak (*Quercus garryana*) stands and their natural habitats.

GOMPS is also authorized by the Ministry of Environment to hold conservation covenants.

We are 100% volunteer run. We are a grassroots group helping to make a difference! **Will you join us?**

## VOLUNTEERS

We are looking for volunteers to help us engage in educational activities, work with all levels of government through letter writing, attend council meetings and public hearings to raise awareness on the importance of Garry oaks and their ecosystems, and work in GOMPS Garry oak nursery.

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## DONATIONS

Donate to GOMPS effortlessly through Canada Helps and support our mission to protect Garry oaks and their ecosystems. We are a registered society in BC with a charitable status recognized by CRA (141110908 RR0001). By donating through Canada Helps, you will receive a charitable tax receipt. Thank you!



[Donate](#)

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## MEMBERSHIP

Join GOMPS today by filling out our printable membership form or make a donation via our website. Tax receipts provided.

But wait, there's more! We're thrilled to announce that we're currently developing an online form to accept memberships and donations through e-transfer and credit cards. Your support means the world to us, so thank you for being a part of this project. Stay tuned for updates! ♥



[Printable Membership](#)



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## 2022-23 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

GOMPS 2022-23 AGM was held on October 22, 2023 between 3:00pm to 5:00pm at the Douglas Fir Room, Saanich Commonwealth Place, 4636 Elk Lake Drive.

Our meeting included:

- Presentation of various reports – President, Nursery, Treasurer & Volunteer
- Election of officers, and
- An open discussion about Garry oak issues with focus on future directions

**Please welcome Carol Milo as our newest board member!**

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## ADVOCACY



*Photography by Ryan Wilkes. Susan Haddon with Garry oak tree. The Narwhal, 2024.*

### **Garry oak ecosystem already suffering ‘death by a thousand cuts’**

The Narwhal Feb 6, 2024

B.C.’s Bill 44, according to Ryan Senechal, could undermine many years of efforts to protect and recover the Garry oak ecosystem. Senechal, an urban forester, is president of the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society, a grassroots group dedicated to preserving, protecting

and restoring Garry oak and its natural habitats. He says the ecosystem is already suffering “death by a thousand cuts.” In 1800, Saanich was home to almost 3,500 hectares of Garry oak ecosystems. By 1997, the last year for which data is available, only 192 hectares remained.

“We don’t have really strong mapping showing existing populations of Garry oaks right now,” Senechal says. “And that is pulling us back.”

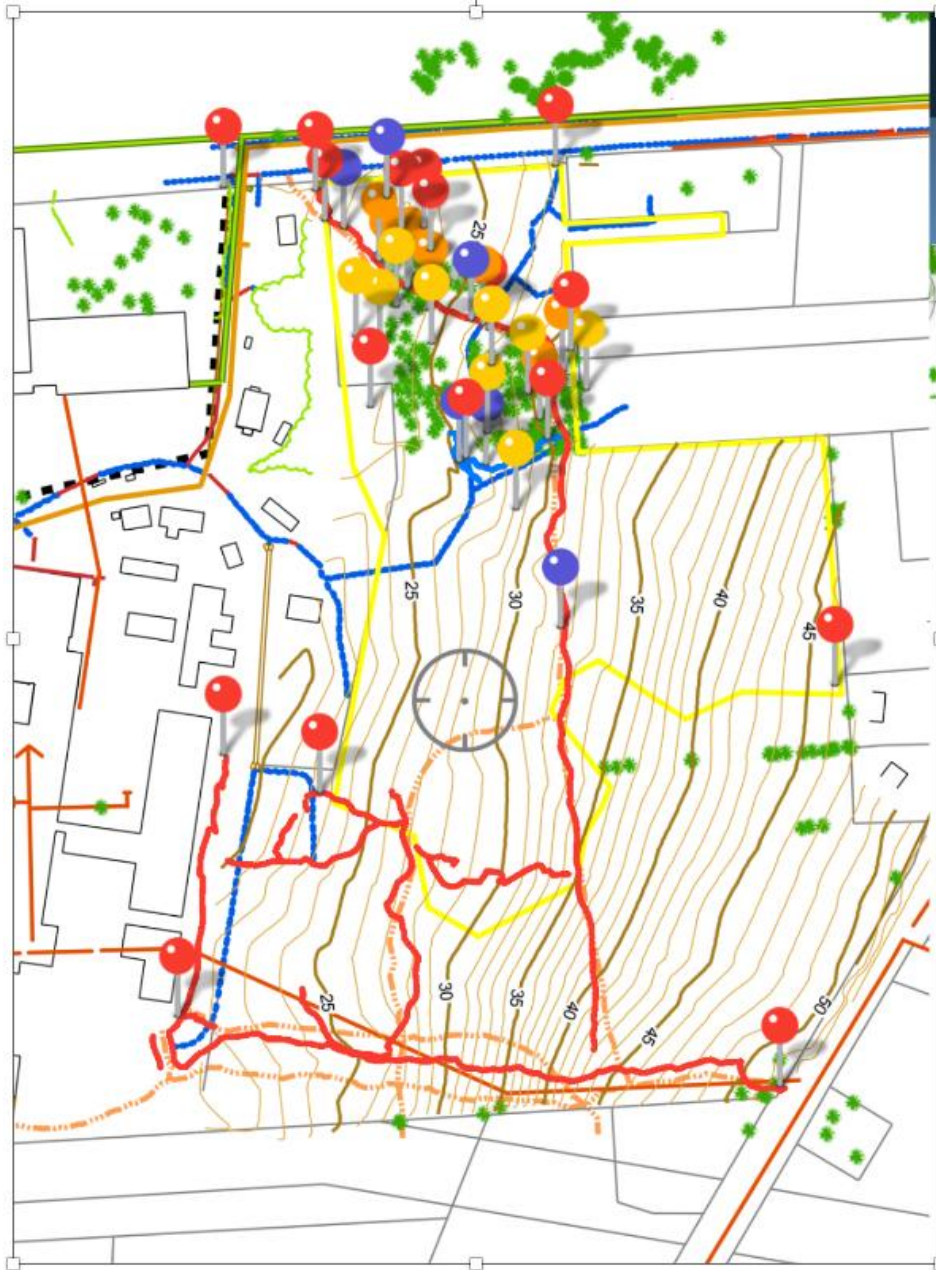
Senechal is standing at the corner of McKenzie Avenue, a busy, four-lane arterial road, and Rainbow, a side street, bounded by a playground and older single family houses, which leads to the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, several blocks away. The sanctuary includes a lake, marshy wetlands and a Garry oak ecosystem on Christmas Hill. In front of Senechal, on the lawn of the property, the twisty branches of a grove of mature Garry oaks reach for the sky.

Next to him is a large white sign letting people know the corner property, along with the two adjacent lots on McKenzie, is subject to a rezoning application. Abstract Developments, a residential and commercial development company based in Victoria, proposes to build a six-storey building with 104 residential units and one commercial unit — a height and density not permitted in Saanich’s current official community plan.

Abstract Developments initially said it would have to remove the Garry oaks. But following three opportunities for official community engagement and door-to-door conversations with neighbours — along with district staff’s recommendation the design be refined to retain more trees, with an emphasis on Garry oaks — in October the developer said it is **willing to revise** the design with the aim of preserving more trees. Saanich has not yet made a final decision about the development, but now it’s not clear how much of a say the district will have.

<https://thenarwhal.ca/bc-ndp-bill-44-urban-forests/>

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Source: <https://comoxvalleynaturalist.bc.ca/vanier-forest-garry-oaks-project/>

## Vanier Nature Park Project

Within a fragment of the historic Tsolum River Garry Oak ecosystem, the Comox Valley Naturalist Society (CVNS) is working to preserve a rare deep soil wetland Garry oak forest in Vanier Nature Park. This land is on the unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation whose stewardship shaped the Garry oak ecosystems of the Comox Valley. The conditions of the remnant Garry oak stands left there today reflect the combined effects over time of Indigenous practices, climatic changes, and the consequences of colonial activity.

In support of their proposal to the City of Courtney to collaborate on remediation work in Vanier Park, CVNS collected data regarding the health of the Garry oaks and the factors within the park that are impacting the survival of this Garry oak ecosystem. CVNS also investigated the hydrology in Vanier Park and consulted with the Tsolum River Restoration

Society and others on salmon stream impacts related to canopy changes. From their recent reports<sup>1,2</sup> come the following observations:

*“Crown cover is almost complete. The Garry oaks dominate the canopy in some areas of the main grove but are being overtopped by Douglas firs (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and grand firs (*Abies grandis*).”*

*“No other live Garry oak trees less than 70 years old (28 cm) were seen and are unlikely to be present due to the elevated level of shade. Few live seedlings were noted, and few acorns were found.”*

*“While we have focused on sunlight being a major limiting factor to the health of the Garry oaks in Vanier Park, the competition for resources with the English holly, *Daphne*, Himalayan blackberry and English ivy is also a major issue.”*

*“Some concern was raised by TRRS that removal of the overtopping conifer shade would tend to overheat the surface waters flowing through the grove. ... the majority of the water charge into the Towhee would likely be sub-surface flows, which vary little in temperature over the seasons.*

*“There is enough existing Garry oak canopy to maintain shade over the tributaries from the time the oaks leaf out in April until the late fall.”*

1. Vanier Nature Park Garry Oak Tree Survey (CVN, 2022)
2. Vanier Nature Park Invasive Species Survey and Garry Oak Mapping Report (CVN, 2023)

**For further information on this project, please**

see <https://comoxvalleynaturalist.bc.ca/vanier-forest-garry-oaks-project/>

**GOMPS provided a Letter of Support for this project**

**Vanier Park, GOMPS 2023**





*The tree canopy along a stretch of Lochside Trail in Saanich. TIMES COLONIST*

## Urban Forest Canopy, City of Victoria

January 13, 2024

The analysis mentioned in the Dec. 29 commentary published by the Times Colonist “Density can mean more homes, more trees, more parks” highlights how simplistic urban forest measurements can lead us all astray.

Ryan Senechal, professional urban forester and GOMPS President, authored a response to the letter writers issuing a caution when considering the urban tree canopy. Senechal drew attention to the distant early warning indicators of deteriorating distributional access to urban trees (and the benefits derived from those trees) as illustrated in public records by the City of Victoria who requested and received third-party technical reports that measured urban forest canopy change over two sample periods.

**Original article:** <https://www.timescolonist.com/opinion/comment-density-can-mean-more-homes-more-trees-more-parks-8037522>

**Ryan Senechal's response:** <https://www.timescolonist.com/opinion/comment-use-caution-when-considering-the-urban-tree-canopy-8105547>

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## EDUCATION

### Nursery Pots

Like many Gardeners interested in growing Garry oak trees, GOMPS nursery workers start with acorns planted in pots. But not all pots are created equal.

#### Notes from GOMPS Volunteer Garry Oak Nursery

An important aspect of nursery work is checking on the health of our seedlings to allow for successful transplanting. GOMPS has explored different container technology to avoid circling roots since optimal root system development is critical for anchorage and water/nutrient uptake functions of establishing trees. Trials conducted a couple of years ago indicated **air pruning pots** (details and link in **Choosing Tree Seeds**, below) were the most effective at controlling the circling defect from occurring, and for tapering vigorous taproots to distribute energy into fibrous root system development.



*Photo by Ryan Senechal. Oak seedling left to right in front of pots*

#### **Seedling #1, #2:**

3 gal air pruning pot: no circling roots, good fibrous density throughout the rootball, radial root growth

#### **Seedling #3:**



1 gal standard pot: spiralling taproot, poor fibrous density, root-bound at the bottom of the container

#### **Seedling #4:**

1 gal tall pot: vigorous and multiple woody tap roots, poor fibrous density, few radial roots apart from at the bottom of the container. This is because the roots are chasing moisture to the ground where irrigation water collects. Circling is occurring at the interface with the ground.

1 gal tall pot: vigorous and multiple woody tap roots, poor fibrous density, few radial roots apart from at the bottom of the container. This is because the roots are chasing moisture to the ground where irrigation water collects. Circling is occurring at the interface with the ground.

1 gal tall pots were much more effective than the 1 gal standard pots at controlling circling woody roots, but they were producing other issues -- mainly that there was no formation of dense fibrous roots and that they were sending vigorous woody taproots chasing water to the bottom of the pot. A fibrous root system is key for survival of container grown trees as they are planted in the ground. Tap roots will not form from container grown oaks with the usual vigour of a tree naturally grown from an acorn, and should not be the sole focus of repotting care.

Check out this planting guide for suggestions on deep nursery pots (also air pruning pots work very well as discussed in the next article below, **Choosing Tree Seeds**), but keep in mind that the Garry oak will eventually need to be planted in the ground. They have a large tap root system and need to be regularly potted up until they can be transplanted into a permanent outdoor location.

<https://goert.ca/gardeners-restoration/planting-caring-for-garry-oak-trees/>

#### **Choosing Tree Seeds**



*Growing Trees from Seed, Creatively United for the Planet, Youtube.*

Arborist and tree grower Ryan Senechal and horticulturist Laura Ralph tell us how to choose Garry oak (also known as Oregon white oak) acorns, Arbutus (also known as Madrona) seeds, Pacific dogwood, bigleaf maple, shore pine, Pacific dogwood, and others. Ryan also mentions how to start Red Osier Dogwood shrub/small tree from live stakes -- a method that also works for willow, black cottonwood, alder, and Oregon ash. This video includes a great discussion on choosing the right pot to start them in.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAQ6bEeWme4>

Additional notes from Ryan Senechal:

If you are looking for the best root systems in seedlings that produce vigorous woody roots and tap roots (like Garry oaks), I'd suggest these 3-gallon air pruning containers:

<https://a.co/d/13ynidD>

If you'd like to avoid purchasing from Amazon, here is an approach to build premium air pruning containers: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ab67eKU0ZeY&t=0s>

Recommended books:

Cuttings Throughout the Year - Joy Spurr

The Reference Manual of Woody Propagation - Dirr and Heuser

The Manual and Plant Grafting - Peter McDonald

We wish you luck and encourage you to contact us if you have any other questions about Garry oaks or GOMPS.

As a community, we can all contribute to restoring Garry oaks and their ecosystem by adding these native species back into our gardens.

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## ACORN DONATIONS



*Photo by Susan Grant. Picture of inside GOMPS nursery fridge with donated acorns.*

Thank you to everyone who collected Garry oak acorns and donated them to our nursery



last fall. We are still working on planting more acorns each week!

## GARRY OAK GALLS INK RESEARCH-CREATION PROJECT



*Photos by Carollyne Yardley. Garry oak galls created by gall wasp on oak seedlings.*

**Oak galls are plant growths** found on foliage and twigs of many species of oak, and are produced by small oak gall wasps. Shapes of galls vary from spherical to urn-shaped to star-shaped to fuzzy. They vary in colour from yellow to green then turn tan-brown and die once the adult insect emerges.

Galls are made of plant tissue and form when an insect secretes a chemical that causes interference with normal plant cell growth. Adults lay eggs in expanding tree buds and leaves in the spring. The larvae then feed, pupate, and emerge from the gall as adult wasps. Fortunately, galls do not cause significant damage to trees, although some leaves may drop prematurely.

In 2023, GOMPS shared a fascinating photo of speckled gall wasps and their plant growths on Instagram. Artist Christi York saw the post and reached out to GOMPS Director and fellow artist Carollyne Yardley. Together, they collaborated on a unique oak gall ink research-creation project. The vacated oak galls were collected from the GOMPS nursery, and Christi transformed them into ink for early experiments on paper. This ancient technique is one of the oldest ways to make permanent black ink. The earliest recorded recipes come from Roman author and naturalist, Pliny the Elder. Many famous and important manuscripts have been written using ferrous oak gall ink, including the **Codex Sinaiticus** the Declaration of Independence, Da Vinci's notebooks, Bach's musical scores,

Rembrandt's drawings, Shakespeare's plays, and the Magna Carta.

Both artists were drawn to creating drawings of different types of stones or rocks using the ink. Follow for more on this exciting project, including oak gall ink recipes GOMPS on Instagram @gomps\_victoria Christi @york\_christi and Carollyne @carollyneyardley



*Photo by Christi York. Mortar and pestal with oak galls. Instagram @york\_christi*





Photo by Carollyne Yardley. Oak gall ink made by Christi York. Instagram @carollyneyardley

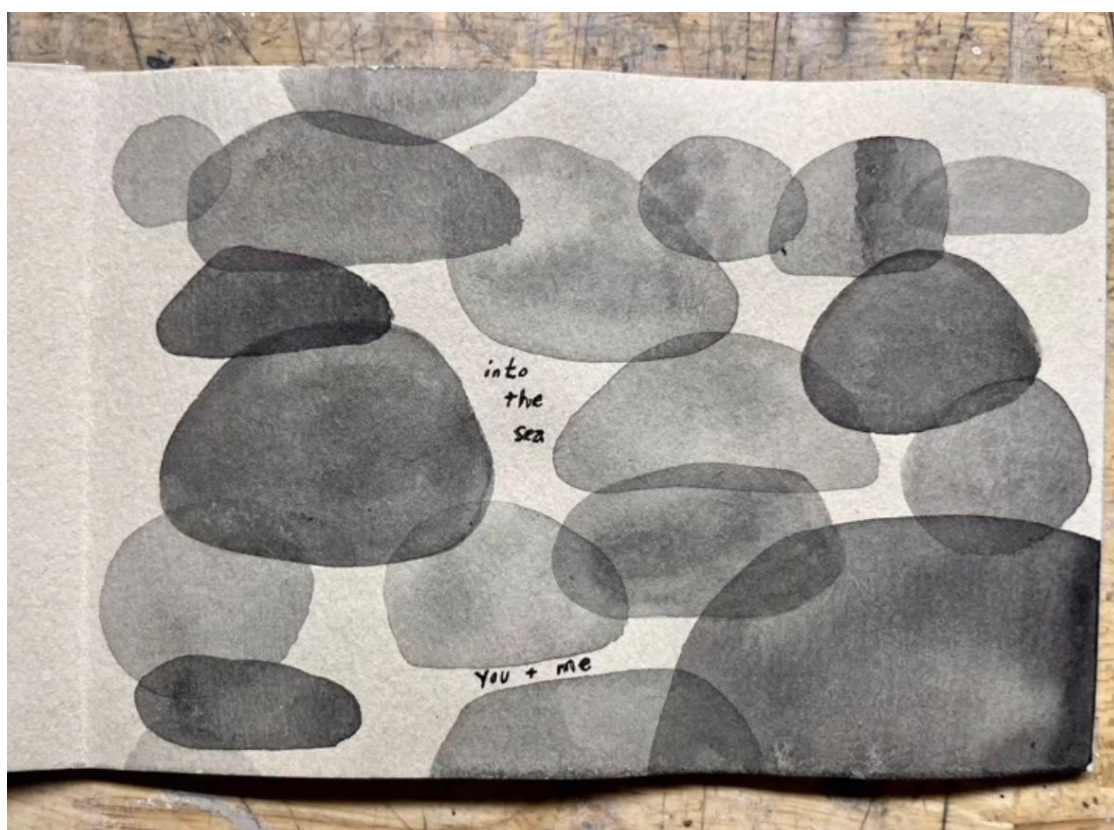




Photo by Martin Gisborne Instagram @martingisborne Indelible, Garry oak gall ink on paper, 2023 via Chrisi York Instagram@york\_christi.



Photo by Carollyne Yardley Instagram @carollyneyardley Untitled, Garry oak gall ink on paper, 2024.

## NEWS



Screen capture from The Moralea Meadow group website.

## Moralea's Meadow group announced a new website launch

<https://moraleasmeadow.ca>

Jan 24, 2024

Moralea's Meadow is located within the endangered Coastal Douglas-fir ecological zone. For millennia, Coast Salish peoples including the local Sc'ianew and T'Sou-ke First Nations created and cared for Garry oak meadows within this zone to nurture beneficial species such as camas. These meadows are a unique habitat within which many plants and animals thrive. A small remnant of meadow habitat (albeit degraded by invasive non-native species) remained on the grounds of the Metchosin District Office. Before her untimely death, Moralea Milne recognized the potential of this site and dreamed of its restoration. In December 2018, Metchosin Council approved a proposal to continue meadow restoration as a living memorial to Moralea. The volunteer group was formed shortly after and work began.

Moralea Milne was a GOMPS member and Board Director.

**Read  
More**



**VICTORIA FOUNDATION**

**Thank you to the Victoria Foundation's Nature-Based Climate Action Funding Call.**

<https://victoriafoundation.bc.ca/grants-funding/nature-based-climate-action-funding/>

January 2024

GOMPS is pleased to share that we were awarded a grant through the Nature-Based Climate Action Funding Call at the Victoria Foundation. GOMPS received a grant from the Environment and Sustainability Fund to assist efforts at the GOMPS Volunteer Nursery. We're excited to keep you posted on the scope of the work project!

**Read  
More**

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**INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?**



**We'd love to hear from all interested volunteers!**



We host weekly Garry Oak Nursery work parties on Sunday mornings from 10am to 1pm to keep our oaks growing and healthy. **Please come help us care for the many distinct community acorn donations we received in 2023.**

The Nursery work area is outdoors and structured so volunteers can safely join Board members on site. Learn more about **volunteering here!**

\*Please note there are certain areas within our premises where children may inadvertently put themselves at risk. Our activities may involve planting and transplanting seedlings. Considering the nature of the tools we utilize, our volunteer work requires care and attention to process. Training is provided.





*Photo by Judith Carder. Nursery with green seedlings.*

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The GOMPS Volunteer Garry Oak Nursery has been in operation since 2017 to meet the challenge of producing locally sourced Garry oaks. The Nursery project is run by a task force drawn from members of GOMPS and addresses the rapid loss of Greater Victoria, Southeastern Vancouver Island & Gulf Island's native flagship tree - the Garry oak (*Quercus garryana*) - our province's only native oak.

Garry oak ecosystems are among the most endangered ecosystems in Canada with **only 3%** remaining in a natural state. In Canada, they are only found in British Columbia, on the southeastern tip of Vancouver Island, some of the Gulf Islands and a few spots on the mainland. We are looking for more volunteers to help at the nursery. Please connect with us and help grow the oaks!

**Volunteering at the Garry Oak Nursery**

**What you can do at home**

**Help us collect acorns**

**Become a Member or Donate**

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*Photo by Ryan Senechal. Camas meadow at Playfair Park, Saanich, BC.*

### **Garry Oak Tree and Garry Oak Ecosystem Facts**

- The ɬə́kwəŋən word for Garry oak ecosystem is Čəŋə́łč or Kwetlal
- The SENĆOŦEN word for Garry oak is ČEN,ɬŁĆ and pronounced Chung-ae-th-ch
- The HUL'Q'UMI'NUM word is p'hwulhp
- Garry oak ecosystems were shaped by Indigenous agroecological management over thousands of years.
- This population of oaks connects ɬə́kwəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ people with their lands, traditions, foods, medicines, cultural practices, and ancestors.
- Of the family Fagaceae, and the genus Quercus. *Quercus garryana*, was named by Botanist David Douglas in the early 1800's to honor his friend Nicholas Garry, an officer in the Hudson Bay Company.
- Garry oak ecosystems arrived after the glacial retreat approximately 10,000 years ago, and at least 1,645 organisms (plants, insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals, etc.) have co-evolved with them.
- Garry oak ecosystems in Canada are some of the rarest, and the area they occupy is declining in large part due to development
- The largest urban oak in Victoria is on Falkland Rd. near Beach Dr. in Oak Bay

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## Territorial Acknowledgement

The GOMPS Volunteer Garry Oak Nursery is located on the traditional territory of the W̱SÁNEĆ people encompassing the five local communities: BO,́KE,́CEN (Pauquachin), MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat), W̱ JOŁEŁP (Tsartlip), W̱ ,SIKEM (Tseycum), and S,ȚAUTW̱ (Tsawout). We acknowledge and thank the W̱SÁNEĆ people on whose traditional territory we live, learn, work, and teach. Our advocacy efforts extend over the lə́kʷəŋən territory, known today as the Esquimalt (Kosapsom) and Songhees Nations. The W̱SÁNEĆ and lə́kʷəŋən people have lived and worked on this land since time immemorial and whose historical relationship to the land and territories continues to this day.

Connect with us!



Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society | Saanich Peninsula, Victoria BC, V8P3T7 Canada

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