



Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society

Dedicated to Protecting Victoria's Heritage Landscape

November 29, 2020

2020 Annual General Meeting

With Covid-19 upon us and the recommendations of physical distancing, our Society has opted not to hold an AGM. A President's Report will take its place and all documents will be filed with the appropriate agencies and authorities in addition to be distributed electronically to members in good standing.

Michael Croteau, President

President's Updated 2020 Report

As in years past the most demanding activity of our Society has been to help address the concerns of the public. Concerns expressed include tree removals, bylaw interpretation, tree health, restoration and gardening questions that relate to Garry oaks and their accompanying plants that would form a traditional meadow or ecosystem. Land subdivision and new home construction seem to account for most of the tree loss and habitat destruction in our area.

Our volunteer nursery project continues to move forward with many measurable successes; trees keep moving out with support from major public land owners such as Saanich, Victoria and CRD Parks. While the majority of trees going out have been to municipalities many are finding new homes on private residential properties and in restoration projects. We are pleased that our seedlings are growing in private yards, school properties and are gaining popularity with municipal promotions such as Tree Day events sponsored by Saanich, Sidney, and Oak Bay Municipalities. CRD Parks, the landowner of our nursery site, has also expressed interest in our trees for restoration projects.

While we often use the word 'purchase' when talking of our efforts to move trees out, I must state clearly that we are not selling product from our nursery. As a non-profit with charitable status through the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) we only accept donations for our seedlings. In accordance with CRA regulations we have established a Fair Market Value (FMV) for our product based on local availability from like businesses. Any donation that exceeds the FMV will receive a tax receipt for the amount in excess of FMV. That receipt may entitle the recipient to a tax deduction depending on their financial situation.

It is with sadness that I report the passing of our nursery's neighbour Kim Manton during the summer of 2020. She was our 'eyes and ears' watching over the land in our absence. A few years ago, in recognition of her contribution, Kim was granted honorary membership in our Society. Her presence and friendship will be missed.

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During 2020, the COVID-19 threat has impacted so many areas of our culture and our Society has not been spared. Most obviously our 2019 Annual General Meeting was initially cancelled, and the volunteer program supporting our nursery was halted but only for a few months. Throughout the spring, activities at the nursery continued largely due to the contribution of Directors with support from a couple of very dedicated volunteers, Susan and Regan. In spite of, or perhaps because of COVID-19, our volunteer numbers increased through summer and fall. With strict adherence to COVID protocols we have been able to continue all necessary tasks to ensure the survival of our stock. As in past years, our contractor Cam Cumming was responsible for much of the site maintenance. Our thanks to Cam and staff for all their good work! Further details of the nursery project are available in the Nursery report written by Peter Woodward and Volunteer report by our Volunteer Coordinator at the time, Mariah Wittkamp.

Two issues in Saanich are indicators of the culture and atmosphere which continue to impact our Society; the pending development of the former Royal Oak Golf Course and the failure of Saanich politicians to replace the Environmental Development Permit Area (EDPA). Saanich residents appear deeply divided as they struggle to find a balance between development and conservation of natural spaces.

Defoliation and pest management issues were addressed using resources from Royal BC Museum, the Victoria Natural History Society and Saanich Planning staff. Jenny Hebb continued to manage our GOMPS website and this year our Society published information advocating tree banding, attraction of beneficial insects/birds using native plants to address concerns over commercial pesticide applications.

Looking back, GOMPS was able to assist with efforts to analyse data from a project that sought to restore Garry oak stands. The southbound Quadra Street exit of Highway 17 near Royal Oak was the site of an experiment many years ago and GOMPS was able to help with connecting those involved with data collection.

A new park in the City of Victoria has been designated honouring former Mayor Peter Pollen. It is hoped that encouragement from our Society and the Community Trees Matter Network will result in City planners including aspects of the Garry oak ecosystem as they landscape it.

On the financial side our Society saw a continued trend of lower membership in 2020. We recognize many people conduct financial transactions electronically and no longer write cheques. This could have a bearing on decisions to join GOMPS or not and we'll be investigating a move toward online financials for GOMPS, providing we can do so without compromising our financial security and the privacy of directors, members, and donors.

On a positive note for 2020, we received donations from Greater Victoria and Vancouver residents, as well as donations through the TD Private Giving Fund, PayPal Giving, Canada Helps, and donations for Garry oak seedlings, helping to offset ongoing nursery expenses. Our 2020 Year End Financial Report provides further details.

Mariah Wittkamp joined GOMPS to take over from Jenny Hebb as our Volunteer Coordinator. Long-time nursery volunteer, Regan Eby, took on the Volunteer Coordinator position when Mariah had to return to university. Thank you for a job very well done, Mariah. Regan can be reached using the newly dedicated email address volunteer: gomps@gmail.com – welcome Regan, we're glad to have you join us! Additional information on the volunteer activities of GOMPS is available in the Nursery Volunteer Summary.

Further to our efforts to draw more attention to the Garry oak ecosystem, we were able to connect residents in other jurisdictions with growers closer to them. These include Loys Maingon in the Comox Valley, a nursery project in Oak Harbor, WA, and restoration efforts on the San Juan Islands and the lower mainland of BC.

This concludes the 2020 President's Report.



Michael Croteau, President