



**GARRY OAK MEADOW
PRESERVATION SOCIETY**

President's Report

Volunteers at the Bear Hill GOMPS nursery have been busy catching up from a long, dry summer now that the rain has returned, and there is much to reflect on from 2023. The return of acorns in abundance after a total acorn crop failure in 2022 has been a relief for our group's growing efforts, and this abundance has also created a windfall opportunity for Garry oak advocacy in the Capital region. Alas, our work advocating for protection of existing oaks has become increasingly complicated over this same period as priorities of governments shift.

The summer months of 2023 brought the driest January to June in recorded history to the Victoria area, and by mid-July British Columbia had declared 2023 as its most destructive and costly wildfire season. Local and provincial governments are rapidly adjusting their approach to housing development in response to a crisis of housing affordability and availability that is decades in the making. Our view is that abundant and truly affordable housing, and healthy, continuous urban forests are not and should not be mutually exclusive.

Cities in the region must rapidly adapt to mitigate the worst effects of climate change: this calls for intelligent development that acknowledges the multi-functional and long-lasting services that urban forests and Garry oak ecosystems provide to Cities at a low cost. The health of urban forests and the benefits they provide to residents, visitors, governments, and biodiversity depends on physical growing space across public and private property, and across municipal boundaries.

We look forward in 2024 to forming new partnerships to exchange knowledge and support their needs for Garry oak ecosystem stewardship. Thank you for your ongoing support as a volunteer, as a member, as a donor, and to everyone who has acquired and planted our trees. We hope you'll continue to support us in the year ahead.

Ryan Senechal
President – Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society