



# The Garry Oak Leaflet

Official newsletter of the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society

April, 2005

## A COMMUNITY'S VISION IS REALIZED

Story and photo by Mary Anne Dieno

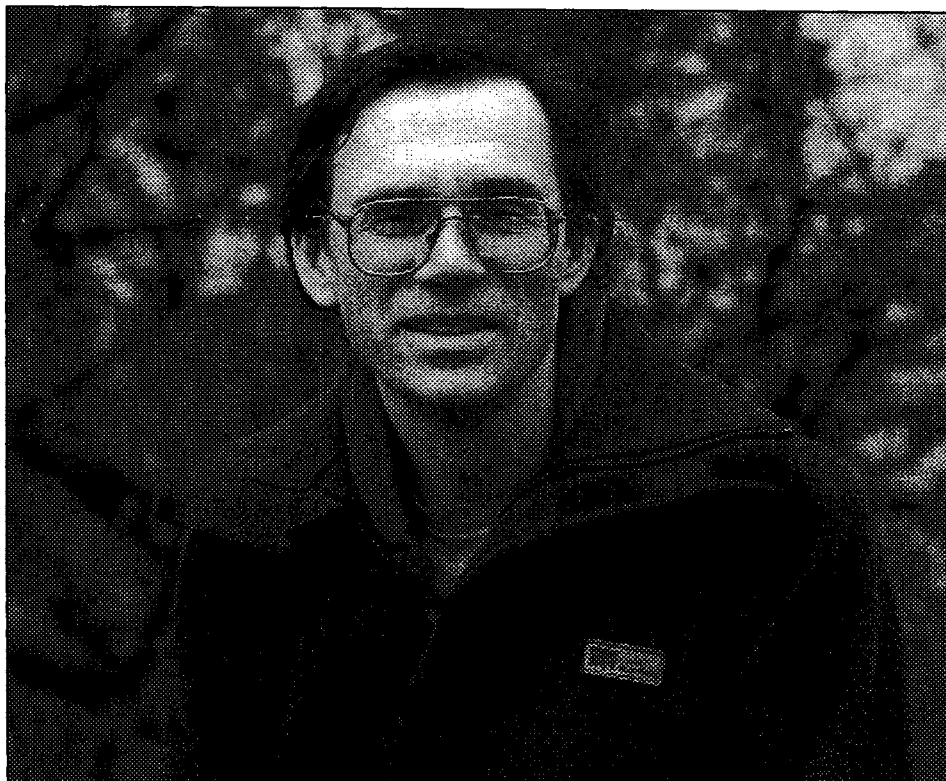
Hidden at the top of Ryan Hill road is a native jewel and an endangered habitat-one of only six untouched Garry oak meadows within the city of Victoria.

The city-owned lot, located near Hillside Mall, was the recent subject of heated debates between local residents and the city. The controversy began in October of 2004 when Marion Montgomery of 1444 Ryan Street spotted city surveyors on the rocky outcropping of the Garry oak stand adjacent to her home.

City councillors originally intended the front of the lot to be incorporated into the Greenways Plan-a means to connect the city through a network of cycling/walking paths. However, the creation of a greenway requires money and the city planned to survey the lot for its potential as a real estate development.

The city expected a profit of \$176,000 from the sale, but for the residents, this was not an option they cared to support.

Local resident Ludo Bertsch organized the formation of a committee-the Oakland's Community Association-dedicated to preserving and defining the goals of each area of the ecologically sensitive space. The committee's vision and purpose was to produce a public park, install an educational plaque on the property illustrating the



Ludo Bertsch - Oakland's community resident and coordinator of Oakland's Community Association.

different native species and allow students and researchers the opportunity to study the inner workings of a Garry oak meadow.

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*"We truly do live in a special neighborhood..."*

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"We wanted to create a profile of a successful preservation of a Garry oak meadow and show it off as an example that worked," says Ludo. The community had already chosen a name for the beloved meadow-Ryan's Haven.

As of January 27, 2005, the meadow has been taken off the city's "for sale" list. At the City of Victoria Committee of the Whole meeting held on January 27 at City Hall, Councillor Dean Fortin put forth the motion to save the space and convert it to a park. The City of Victoria Parks Division will work with the community in developing their vision of Ryan's Haven to make it a place where all can enjoy its beauty.

The community credits the successful outcome largely to the support of councillors Dean Fortin and Helen Hughes, who introduced the motion.

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The residents' contributions were also significant. According to Bertsch, "there were so many fabulous emails and letters. We truly do live in a special neighbourhood that we all care about."/

Now that the park is secured, donations and volunteers are needed to assist with the removal of invasive species and general tidy-up of the area. If you would like to help, make a donation, or stay informed about the progress of the park, please visit the Oakland's community website at [www.blockcommunities.com](http://www.blockcommunities.com) or contact Ludo Bertsch at 592-0487.

## STANDING THEIR GROUND

Story by Christine Feleki

Requests for the removal and pruning of Garry oak trees in 2004 were up 50 percent over the previous year according to Oak Bay municipal arborist Sean Novak.

Novak believes the high number is due to hot summer temperatures, and winter drought. These conditions have caused "pop-off" - also known as sudden branch failure. Garry oaks need water during the spring-summer period to allow food creation and storage, expansion of crown, stem and roots, and to develop acorns and to protect against attacks by insects and disease. However, they are remarkably hardy and accustomed to frequent drought periods, so that weekly watering near lawns and flower beds will suffice to maintain them until fall rains commence. Over-watering may harm trees by weakening the roots and allowing root disease to flourish. Both seasons contribute to the phenomenon of pop-off.

Fifty-nine of the 153 permit requests last year were for the removal of the dead, dying, diseased and hazardous trees. The other 94 permits were for the pruning of Garry oak trees.

Novak also believes low interest rates may be a factor in the high

### SAANICH/OAKBAY PERMIT REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

Saanich:

- ¥ Any removal or pruning requires a permit
- ¥ A permit is required anytime work is done in the root zone
- ¥ Trees in the building envelope are not always protected. It depends on the size of the lot.
- ¥ Urban areas need a permit
- ¥ Rural areas require no permit, unless chopping more than allowed on agricultural land
- ¥ All trees are protected along waterways, and some steep slopes.

Cut Down means to cut down, kill or remove a tree by any means and includes the topping of a tree and the removal of any branch or trunk of a tree having a diameter of more than 10 centimeters (3.9 inches).

Tree means any living, erect, woody plant which is:

- i) five metres (16.3 feet) or more in height, or
- ii) 10 centimeters (3.9 inches) or more in diameter, or
- iii) a replacement tree planted pursuant to Section 16 of this bylaw
- iv) a replacement tree planted as a condition of a permit issued under this bylaw.

Oak Bay:

- ¥ Any removal or pruning requires a permit
- ¥ Trees in the building envelope are not protected; however, the municipality still needs to be informed

Cut Down means to cut down, kill or remove a tree by any means and includes the topping of a tree and the removal of any branch or trunk having a diameter of

more than 25 centimeters (9.84 inches) measured at 1.4 metres (4.5 feet) above ground.

Prune means to remove living or dead tree parts, which are greater than 10 centimeters (3.9 inches) but less than or equal to 25 centimeters (9.84 inches) in diameter, for a purpose consistent with promoting the tree's health and growth.

Tree means a living, erect, woody plant of the quercus garryana genus and species which is:

- (a) 25 centimeters (9.84 inches) or more in diameter measured at 1.4 metres (4.5 feet) above ground; or
- (b) A replacement tree planted pursuant to Section 10 of this Bylaw.

Source:

[www.gov.saanich.bc.ca](http://www.gov.saanich.bc.ca)  
[www.district.oakbay.bc.ca](http://www.district.oakbay.bc.ca)

permit numbers. "Oak Bay has seen an increase in larger homes." Larger homes mean larger building envelopes. "Garry oaks within the building envelopes are left unprotected," says Novak. The municipality still keeps track of the tree removals.

"I am guessing 15 trees have been removed for this reason," says Novak. He includes the 15 trees in the 59 removal permit requests. Keep in mind that Oak Bay does not consider anything less than 10 inches in diameter a "tree".

As for removals without permits, Novak says he has not heard of any.

In 2004, Saanich had 900 permit requests for all species of protected trees. Ron Carter, Saanich tree preservation officer, estimates since

the 1993 Tree Protection Bylaw, several hundred oaks have been removed. "Not all of these oaks were protected ... but [they were] still [cut] under permit. Some were cut illegally."

Yet, for the several hundred removed, thousands have been saved because of the tree preservation bylaw. This is due to three factors: removal was refused, protection occurred during development, and many Garry oaks are designated as significant (heritage) trees.

Healthy Garry oak trees cut under permit are required to be replaced at a ratio of two to one. A few hundred replacement oaks have been planted in Saanich since 1993.