



FRIENDS OF BEACON HILL PARK SOCIETY

May 2002

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City Council

The Friends of Beacon Hill Park is a Society dedicated to preserving the natural and cultural history of Beacon Hill Park and promoting appropriate uses in keeping with its varied ecosystems.

As the population of Greater Victoria continues to grow and place greater stress upon the park, we count on your support to help us continue our projects and work to help protect the park.

Membership is \$5.00 per household. Benefits include the satisfaction of helping preserve the park, input in management of the park for the future use of all, and participating in the Society's activities. You are welcome to attend the monthly meetings of the directors. Please call for date and location.

Friends of Beacon Hill Park

1-366 St. Charles St.
Victoria, BC, V8S 3N3
250-592-6659

www.friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca

Camas Day

A Celebration of the Garry Oak Habitat

Saturday May 4, 2002

Beacon Hill Park (meet at the flagpole)

Guided Walks (length 1 hr)

9:00 am only ->

Birding Walk led by Tom Gillespie and Dannie Carsen,
Victoria Natural History Society

11:00 am and 1:00 pm ->

Archaeology Walk led by Dr Grant Keddie, Royal BC Museum

11:00 am and 1:00 pm ->

Wild Flower Walks led by Dr Chris Brayshaw, Royal BC Museum and Dr Adolf Ceska, Conservation Data Centre

Presented by Friends of Beacon Hill Park and Victoria Natural History Society

For more information call 592-6659

Annual General Meeting

April Pettinger and Brenda Costanzo, collaborators on the newly released 2nd Edition of "Native Plants in the Coastal Garden" will give a short talk and slide-show about their book. This book helps home gardeners to integrate native plants into their own gardens. Refreshments will be served.

Business will include two amendments to the constitution:

1. "To oppose all establishments and activities addressing themselves to profit and utility not needful or incidental to the physical maintenance of Beacon Hill Park, and in contravention of the terms of the Trust and the Rulings of Begbie, J. (1883) and Wilson, J. (1998)."
2. "No elected official of the City of Victoria nor employee of the City of Victoria shall sit on the Board of the Friends of Beacon Hill Park." ❖

Garage Sale

Garage Sale - Saturday, May 25th, 2002 starting at 8:00 am at 25 Cook Street. The phoning committee chair, Dr. Renate Varwig, will be contacting members for a garage sale fundraiser again this year. You can drop off your donations a week before the sale at the garage of 25 Cook Street. ❖

THE WHITE FAWN-LILY:

ERYTHRONIUM OREGONUM

By T. Christopher Brayshaw
28 March, 2002

April is the month of the Fawn Lily, or Easter Lily: our most graceful native flowering plant.

This lily's usually solitary, white, 6-petalled flower nods from a slender stalk above a rosette of symmetrically brown-spotted leaves. Colonies of this graceful lily contribute a special beauty to the open, grassy-floored Garry Oak woods that are its natural habitat.

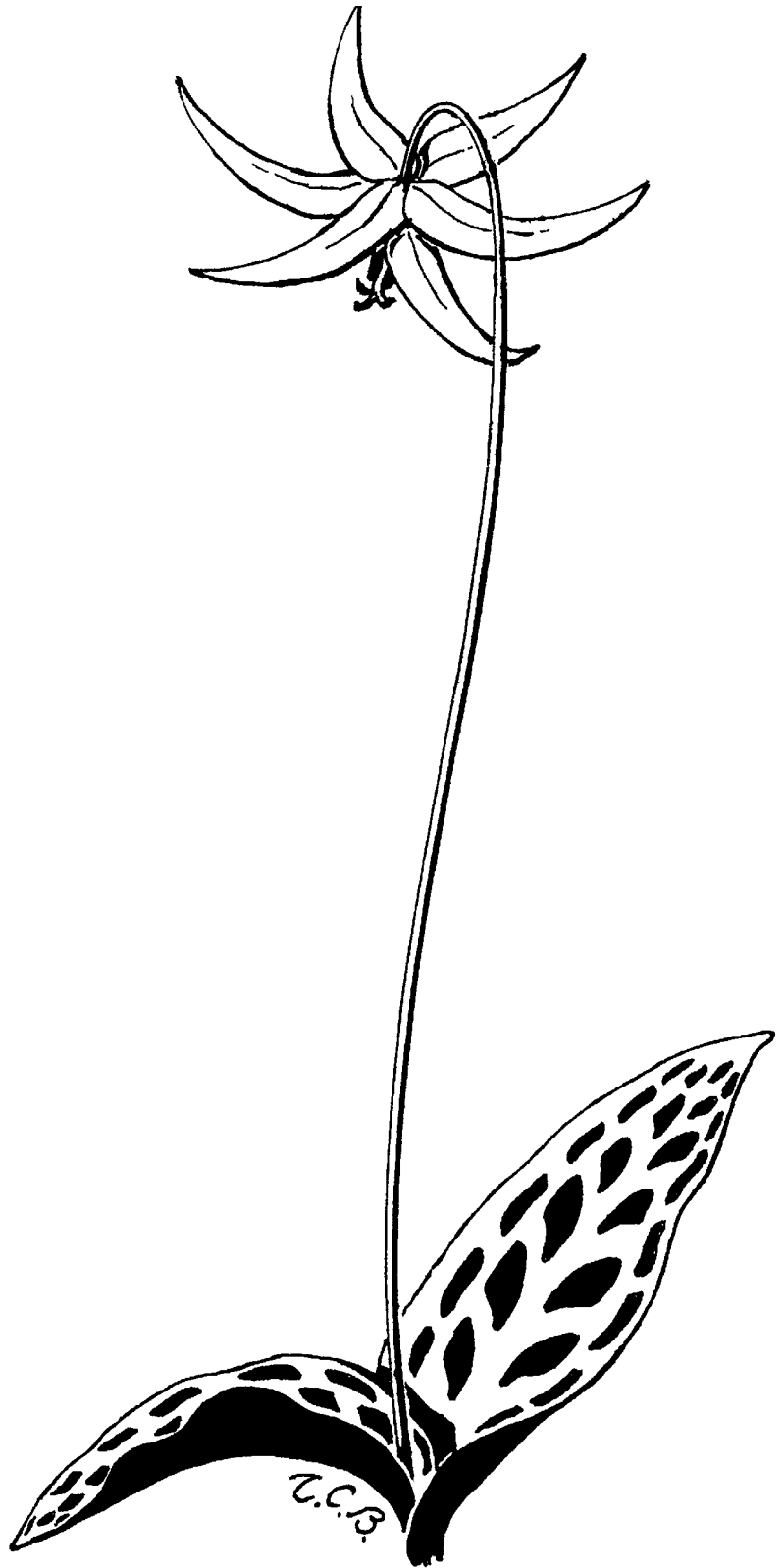
After its flowering season is past, its stem straightens, so the seed pod stands erect. In this attitude, a significant blow or shake is needed to catapult the seeds out and away from the plant; so that they don't just drop on top of the plant that bore them – a simple but effective seed-dispersal mechanism.

This species ranges from southern Oregon to British Columbia west of the Cascade and Coast Ranges. In the plant collection at the Royal British Columbia Museum, there are records from Vancouver Island locations from the Victoria area to near Campbell River, and westward to the Alberni area, and from several other islands. The northernmost record here is from Whaletown, on Cortes Island.

This beautiful species is as threatened as its habitat; which, never very extensive in this country, is now being progressively subverted to urban or residential development.

In the NATURE CONSERVANCY ranking system for rare plants, this species is ranked N2 for Canada, and S2 for British Columbia. This ranking indicates that this species is considered imperiled because of rarity in this country (Argus & Pryer, 1990).

The little remnant of this imperiled species in its natural habitat that is still preserved in Beacon Hill Park deserves to be cherished, and



given whatever protection the public can provide.

Reference:

Argus, George W., and Kathleen M. Pryer, 1990. Rare Vascular Plants in Canada: our Natural Heritage. Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Nature. ❖

So Why the Interest in Native Plants?

In Victoria, the current trend is towards growing native plants in our gardens. And for good reason. What else can you plant and forget? Once they are established for the first year, you don't even need to water them in the hot dry summers. Watering restrictions? Who cares? The native bulbs bloom madly in spring when they get watered by Mother Nature and sleep away the summer deep under ground. The native trees and shrubs continue their interest throughout the rest of the year. They are disease and pest resistant so you can throw out all your deadly potions. How many people do you know that have to spend hours pruning their wild roses? Or weeding their wild flower meadows? Stop buying bags of fertilizer, as natives want natural fertilizer like well-rotten leaves you didn't rake up last fall. How about those furry and feathered friends who lurk at the edges of your property. Invite them in to visit. The native shrubbery will provide seeds and berries for food as well as safe havens from predators. You will be doing your part to preserve the dwindling populations of our unique flora and fauna and have enough leisure time to enjoy them instead of being a slave to that lawnmower and pruning shears. Here's a list of resources to get you started.

Where to Purchase Native Plants

Thimble Farms Nursery, Saltspring Island. phone 250-537-5788.

Woodland Native Plant Nursery, Happy Valley Road. phone 478-6084.

Swan Lake Wildflower Weekend. April 20–21 this year but held every year at same time.

Uvic Finnerty Gardens Plant Sale, University of Victoria. First Sunday in May.

Most local nurseries have a native plant corner. Just ask. If they don't, encourage them to do so.

Where to see Native Plant Gardens

Royal BC Museum Native Plant Gardens.

Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary Native Plant Garden.

Ask for the booklet 'A Guide to Backyard Water Conservation' produced by Swan Lake in cooperation with The Greater Victoria Water District.

Books on Gardening with Native Plants

- Native Plants in the Coastal Garden by April Pettinger and Brenda Costanzo.

The book will be available after April 25 at Cadboro Bay Books, 3840B Cadboro Bay Road.

- Gardening with Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest by Arthur Kruckeberg.

For those people interested in Victoria's weather in easy-to-understand terms, pick up Rick Lee's book "Victoria's Neighbourhood Climates and Weather" at Science Works, 1889 Oak Bay Ave.

Native Plant Reference Books

- Plants of Coastal British Columbia by Pojar & MacKinnon.
- Trees and Shrubs of British Columbia by Dr. T. Christopher Brayshaw.
- Trees, Shrubs & Flowers to know in BC and Wash by C.P. Lyons and Bill Merilees.

Groups Involved with Native Plants in Victoria

- Native Plant Society of British Columbia. Call 361-3122.
- Native Plant Study Group of the Victoria Horticultural Society. Call 361-3122.
- Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society. Call 477-2410.
- Victoria Natural History Society. Call 995-2428❖

Planning for Victoria's Greenways

This year the City of Victoria is creating a Greenways Plan: finding out where people walk, bike, scoot, run and skate, and where they would like to, so existing and new routes can be protected, enhanced or created. We are also identifying key heritage, recreational, environmental, and public spaces that could be included along GreenWays routes.

Saturday, May 11th from 10 am to 3 pm at the Pandora Activity Centre
Walkabouts from 12:30-3pm will be: downtown, Beacon Hill and City Cycle tours. ❖

Lament For the Meadow

by Helen Oldershaw

*One man, two men, three men went,
Went to mow the meadow...*

When the Europeans first came to the Victoria area, they were enchanted by the bright, open landscape. This was indeed a veritable “Eden”.

However, the settlers soon realized that this attractive land was not suited to the growing of food crops using their traditional methods. The soil was deep but coarse and rapidly draining.

The original inhabitants of the area, the Lekwammen, had employed a very different, but very successful method of agriculture. To promote the yield of their main carbohydrate source, the Camas bulbs, they regularly burnt back the bush with quick fires that kept the meadow open, but did not damage the mature trees. Thus, the Eden-like landscape was not totally a gift of nature; it was also the result of the practical modification of the land by a resourceful society. This knowledge was not recognized at the time, and the new settlers went on to further modify the land in quite a drastic way.

To promote sheep and cattle farming, cultivated grasses were introduced. These grasses had been developed over centuries to withstand extensive mowing and trampling. The native grasses and herbaceous plants of the meadows of Beacon Hill Park could not withstand such rough treatment. In the early days of the park, the meadows were subjected to the trampling of grazing cattle and horse-racing enthusiasts, and later on by much larger crowds attending events such as Trudeau arriving in a helicopter, or Queen Elizabeth lighting a bonfire. Also, mowing was done early in the season, and that, combined with the soil disturbance, would make way for the invasion of the European-cultivated grasses and weedy plants into the park, ultimately changing the natural ecosystem.

Dr. Brian Holl of the Department of Plant Sciences at UBC explains: “Some plant species respond positively to mowing; this is particularly true of

cultivated turfgrass species. More regular mowing, or mowing which provides these species with a competitive advantage, will increase their contribution to the overall populations, changing the botanical nature of the meadow over time. Since many of the (native) species...can flower from spring into the summer months, early mowing will decrease the seed reproduction potential of these plants.”

The meadows of Beacon Hill Park are still subjected to continuing degradation due to overuse and staff cutbacks. The Great Canadian Picnic in 1991 on the south meadow; a clear-out of blackberry and broom in the western slope of Beacon Hill, during which Garry Oak seedlings and Rein Orchids were inadvertently mown in the late summer of 1989; and another accidental mowing, that of the restoration plots beside the Northwest Ridge in 2001, are a few examples. Daily damage is caused by off-leash dogs and off-path mountain bikers. Trampling of the meadows by people using the park for large-scale fund-raising events compacts the soil, and have even worn bare patches along a newly-created trail. The executive of the Friends hope to set up a meeting soon with the new Director of Parks, Mike Leskiw, to introduce ourselves, voice our concerns and offer our assistance. Members can write to Mayor and Council and phone the Parks Department requesting that your concerns be recorded in writing. If we want to preserve what remains of the park’s natural areas, we must try harder to protect them.

REFERENCES:

T. C. Brayshaw Ph.D, The ‘Natural’ Areas of Beacon Hill Park, 1990.

F. Brian Holl Ph.D, P.Ag., Human Impacts of Vegetation, 1993.

John Lutz Ph.D, Preparing Eden: Aboriginal Land Use and European Settlement, 1995. ❖

Youth and the Environment

Interview with Lucas Kavanagh by Cornelia Lange

Lucas attended the Beacon Hill Montessori Preschool and is currently finishing grade five at South Park School. He will transfer to Central High next September in the new Middle School reconfiguration. Lucas cares for the environment, has tremendous talent in music, and is supported in his interests by his parents Janis and Owen. They lived in James Bay and moved to Fairfield, Beacon Hill Park being a constant in their lives: first as a playground and now as part of his walk to school.

I contacted Lucas regarding a school project that South Park School completed last year, "Mapping Beacon Hill Park". Teachers divided their classes into groups, and each were assigned to develop a brochure on various topics: dog walking, tourists, biking, history, and sports. Each brochure had a map locating the best places in the park on each topic.

The school children often visit the park for exercise, schoolwork, and outings. Children were to name their favourite spot in the park. To Lucas, these places change as he grows older, but most memorable are the playground in his early years and the Cameron Bandshell for its concerts. He also looks forward to snowy days and sledding down Beacon Hill. Squirrels, which resemble his South American pet—a degu—are his favourite park animals.

Lucas was excited to hear about the new goals for the park. He wholeheartedly supports a car free, pesticide free park and the use of quiet tools to maintain it. He loudly protested to the sounds of leaf blowers and considers it a negative experience in the park.

Lucas was recently accepted as a Canadian Delegate for the International Children's Conference on the Environment for children from 115 countries aged 10 to 12 at UVic this May 21st to 25th. The children's conference began during the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro when David Suzuki's daughter spoke to the delegations about saving the environment for future generations.

There are several topics for discussion at the conference:

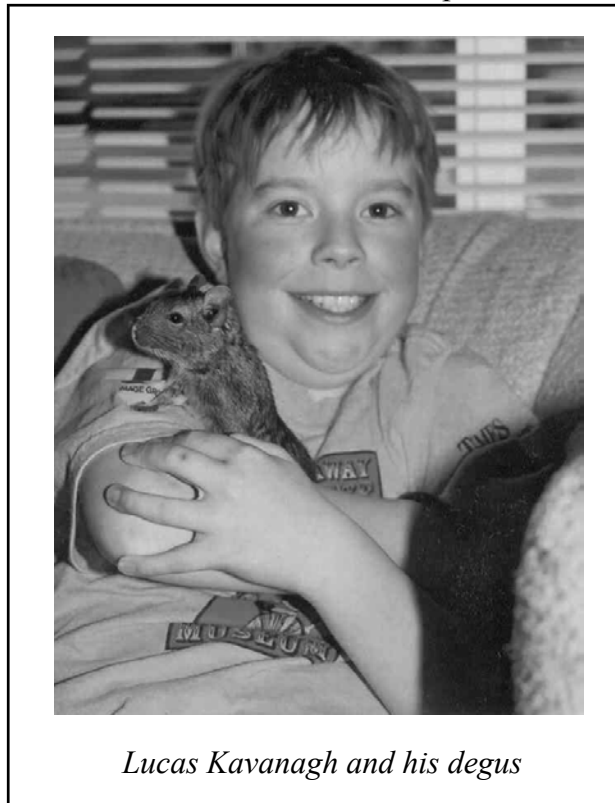
- Water: The Essence of Life and Survival
- Climate Change: Each One of Us Can Make a Difference
- Healthy Communities, Healthy Children: Linking Children's Health & the Environment
- Resource Conservation: Reducing our Impact on the Environment

Workshops and fieldtrips will focus on marine biology, forest practices, water conservation, appropriate transportation, sustainable agriculture and species protection.

Lucas and I spoke about our own unique environment here in Victoria and the southern island. Lucas was shocked to hear that only 1% of the native Garry Oak ecosystem still remains today. With future building in our city, Beacon Hill Park may be the last remnant of this wondrous landscape—but only if we protect it.

Best wishes to Lucas in representing us at the conference and we hope he enjoys himself as he shares his ideas and gathers many valuable lessons from others at the conference.

www.icccanada2002.org ❖



Lucas Kavanagh and his degu

Minutes from City Council, Committee of the Whole

February 21, 2002

BEACON HILL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN
02/140

Committee received a memorandum dated February 13, 2002 from the Manager, Park Design & Development regarding the Beacon Hill Park Management Plan. Victoria City Council, at its meeting on October 11, 2001:

- Received the Beacon Hill Park Management Plan Phase 1 reports
- Adopted the vision and goals developed by the Beacon Hill Park Round Table
- Directed staff to develop clear guidelines on commercialism as the first priority in implementing the Phase 1 recommendations.

Since then the Round Table has addressed the issue of commercialism, and the results were presented in an attached report entitled *Achieving Peace in the Park*.

The memorandum advised that staff supports the recommendations of the Round Table, and it outlined priorities for further work.

ACTION: Councillor Savoie moved that it be recommended to Council that:

The Round Table report entitled *Achieving Peace in the Park* be received for information.

Staff be directed to proceed with implementation of the recommendations contained in the Round Table report, giving priority to the action items referred to in the report dated February 13, 2002 from the Manager, Park Design & Development.

Staff be requested to return to Committee of the Whole with regular progress reports.

“We must stress that the Round Table did not reach consensus on ‘Achieving Peace In The Park,’ was not formally adopted by Council, and should not be regarded as representative of the final work of the Round Table.”❖

Round Table's Vision

Victorians value Beacon Hill Park as a peaceful oasis in the heart of their city, providing enjoyment of beautiful views and surroundings. These include magnificent ornamental gardens and seasonal landscaping as well as natural ecosystems, unique to this region, where camas blooms in Garry Oak meadows and heron rookeries grace tall stands of Douglas-fir. The park's natural and historical features, together with its Victorian era landscape design, are culturally significant to the people of the city. In addition, First Nation's traditional use of land and sea resources and of the area as a social gathering place and sacred burial site provides a valued legacy. Together, these attributes create important educational opportunities for learning about the park's natural environment, plants and animals, culture and history. Publicly owned, and protected in Trust since 1882, the park has been valued ever since for its free and open access to its land and beaches, and a wide range of recreational and leisure areas and facilities.

In the future, the attributes of Beacon Hill Park that are so cherished today will be maintained and enhanced. People seeking an escape from the surrounding city will continue to enjoy a variety of leisure and recreation activities in the park's inspiration setting. Natural areas, ornamental gardens and playing fields will be preserved, maintained and enhanced, and a variety of other appropriate recreation areas and facilities will add to public enjoyment of the park. In addition, the park will be a significant environmental, historical, archaeological and cultural heritage site, offering enhanced opportunities for visitors to learn about these characteristics. The park will be safe and easily accessible to the public, and its natural integrity and pedestrian-friendly character will not be compromised by motor vehicle traffic. Trained personnel with adequate resources will provide quality care, following a management plan that preserves and restores the integrity of both natural and ornamental environments, in accordance with the Trust.

Round Table's Goals

1. Preserve, at minimum, the park's current legal boundary.
2. Put back into park use, where possible, those utility areas and transportation corridors not supporting park leisure, recreation and maintenance.
3. Establish a policy directed towards the minimization of 'hardscape' while maintaining accessibility.
4. Promote a calming environment overall, and maintain areas of serenity that are removed from more boisterous park uses.
5. Establish and enforce guidelines and regulations to restrict commercialism in the park and make reference to the terms of the Trust and subsequent legal judgements (e.g., Begbie and Wilson).
6. Identify and document the park's natural and physical attributes.
7. Enhance and protect natural environments, and restore natural systems.
8. Ensure, as best possible, that external influences inherent in the park's urban setting do not contribute to the degradation of the park.
9. Identify, document, preserve and maintain the park's historical, archaeological and cultural attributes.
10. Assess the park in terms of its carrying capacity to support recreational and leisure activities, and control activities to preserve its natural or historical values, and character.
11. Recognize the importance of Beacon Hill Park as a place for leisure and recreational pursuits.
12. Define in the management plan the range of recreational and leisure activities and associated facilities that are appropriate to the park, and the guidelines within which they may occur.
13. Promote inclusive use of park facilities
14. Communicate guidelines that define appropriate behaviour and uses in the park.
15. Ensure the safety and security of all users by assessing risks and hazards, and enact appropriate management actions to protect park users.
16. Work closely with enforcement officers, park users and neighbours to discourage crime and vandalism.
17. Encourage access by a range of people including children, disabled persons, senior citizens and those with mobility impairments.
18. Develop; a plan and establish new regulations to manage non-pedestrian traffic in the park.
19. Create and maintain pedestrian area that are safe and accessible, and that complement the surrounding landscape.
20. Reduce/minimize/limit vehicular use and associated impacts and promote modes of transport that are in keeping with it natural setting.
21. Maintain appropriate parking facilities while recognizing the need to minimize 'hardscape'.
22. Communicate and promote awareness of the park's values to support their protection.
23. Develop a communication plan which includes a variety of educational and interpretive opportunities accessible to a wide range of people.
24. Use unobtrusive methods, and access available technologies, to communicate to the public in ways which are respectful of the park's setting and character.
25. Develop a comprehensive long-term management plan for the park that is reviewed every five years.
26. Seek public advice and input on the implementation and monitoring of the park management plan through the establishment of a representative public advisory group and other public consultation mechanisms.
27. Develop an adequate and clearly-defined budget exclusive to Beacon Hill Park.
28. Provide an adequate number of well-trained staff.
29. Maintained the park with quiet tools and environmentally sensitive methods.
30. Prepare an annual public report on park use and management impacts.
31. Enforce all by-laws and regulations

