

# Volunteers In Parks

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Volunteers removing giant knotweed



## Restoration Work Inside and Outside the Parks

By Anna Fodchuk

Here's the list:

Remember oxeye daisy. Daphne. Scotch Broom. Include English ivy, both spotted and black knapweed, and policeman's helmet. Toss in common tansy and Japanese knotweed. Then add yellow flag iris, purple loosestrife and giant hogweed.

I could go on and on....

Put them all together and these invasive species can kill off your rhodos, grow through your house's foundation, and even severely injure you! Not to mention threatening native plant and animal diversity. These invasive plants are found growing in our parks, in our gardens and everywhere else they can.

Before I moved to the island I didn't pay attention to invasive species. All provinces have their share, and BC is no exception. On coming to the island, I started to learn about restoration work. Groups of dedicated volunteers sweeping through meadows, ditches and pathways, all to remove the many threatening plants.



Making a difference...together

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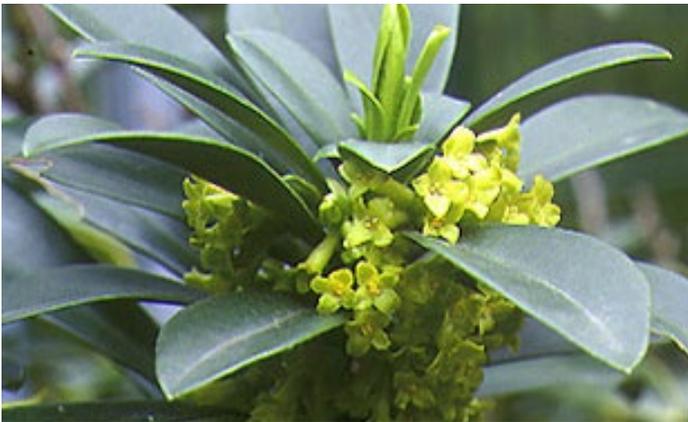
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Oxeye daisy Photo Anna Fodchuk



Black knapweed Photo Dave Evans



Daphne Photo C. Maslovat



Carpet Burweed

I took up the cause and began to help. I've never been so determined (almost in tears), to dig out black knapweed with sweat, chisel and others as I've done along the roads in Metchosin. As a restoration volunteer, my work has taken me to our parks removing policeman's helmet, knapweed, English ivy, hemlock, yellow archangel and Scotch broom.

Of course, we all know about Scotch broom. It's all over the island! In Mill Hill Regional Park, many volunteer hours have been spent removing this brilliant yellow flowering plant that negatively affects our Garry oak ecosystem; from choking out the native wildflowers to killing the magnificent oaks. I will always think of Captain Walter Grant who intentionally introduced the plant to BC in 1850. Perhaps one way to be remembered by, but not the best in my opinion....

The restoration work in the parks has helped me recognize invasive plant species everywhere. In our cities, our neighbourhoods and even in our home gardens. One needs to be careful what one purchases at local garden centres. Components of wildflower seed mixes - bachelor buttons, common periwinkle, policeman's helmet and purple loosestrife were widely promoted by many gardeners. Now, we've come to realize that they are invasive due to their rapid growth and adaptability to our climate.

Even English ivy, though lovely, is problematic. Often I hear visitors say, "It's so GREEN!" as they stroll along the Empress Hotel. Though this widely planted evergreen vine is a welcomed ornamental, as one of my restoration colleague cried out "It's

NASTY to pull out!" It really is a smothering invasive plant which suppresses native vegetation and reduces wildlife habitation.

Ever wonder about oxeye daisy? I did. They look like such a beautiful bunch of happy flowers. One day as I worked in my garden I carefully inspected the cheery-faced daisy I had inherited from the previous home owner. The brochure *Be Plantwise, Grow Me Instead*, published by the Invasive Species Council of BC helped me figure out if these were invasive. The final test was a whiff of the flowers - Phew! Smells like urine. Thankfully, they aren't oxeye daisies. Otherwise there would be a significant risk of them escaping and adding to all the other invasive plants.

Restoration work seemingly never ends. The CRD team has been at the Scotch broom for over 10 years on Mill Hill alone. New efforts are on the horizon for other plants such as Japanese knotweed; it's apparently eating up BC.

So, what can you do to help? Consider joining a restoration team would be one way. Another way would be to make wise choices in your own garden. Finally, just being informed can make a difference; reading this article is a good start. You can also find out more information about invasive species in the Capital Regional through [CRISP: Capital Regional Invasive Species Partnership](#), which is a sub-committee of the Coastal Invasive Species Committee.

*Anna Fodchuk is a Restoration Volunteer.*



## VIP Profile

**M**argaret How is a Restoration Volunteer since 2014 and recently came on as a Trail Ambassador. She has volunteered at Mill Hill, Elk/Beaver Lake, East Sooke, Thetis Lake and the Galloping Goose.

### **What do you enjoy most about volunteering?**

I enjoy meeting people with like ideas. Gaining and sharing knowledge while restoring balance in the parks. I've learned a lot about the flowers and am working on mosses; other volunteers are helping me to remember names.

### **What is your favourite Regional Park and why?**

That is not too difficult for me, it has to be Mill Hill. It's my morning wake up view every day. And I walk my dog up there usually once a day. It's a great place to meet people and nature.

### **What is your favourite volunteer experience or memory?**

I guess it was when I found out you can slide on dry grass one spring day of broom removal. I thought I was away from the slips and slides of winter. Then having others in the group trying it out as well.

### **Tell us a bit about yourself.**

I am a recently transplanted Easterner (I mean we are doing restoration), taking root here and continuing my volunteering, (but hopefully not an invasive species). I enjoy gardening but am not fanatical about it and am encouraging native species in my garden.



## Staff Profile

**T**om Gestwa is Acting Supervisor for Regional Trails. He has been in the position since 2015 and with Regional Parks since 1998.

### **Where have you worked previously?**

I worked for Green Acres Golf Driving Range in Metchosin, where I would provide maintenance to the golf course and driving range. Cur-Quinn Delivery Systems, delivering general Freight. Sleeman Brewery, delivering kegs etc. to local pubs and liquor stores. Apex Fitness Equipment, where I was a drill press operator, fabricator, and assembler. At the CRD, I worked at Seaparc maintaining the recreation centre and Building services maintaining several CRD-owned properties. I also volunteered with the Metchosin Fire Department for about 16 years.

### **What is your favourite Regional Park and why?**

I like many of our parks but would have to say Witty's Lagoon. I spent lots of my childhood at Witty's playing at the beach, building sand castles and flipping over rocks, collecting crabs, paddling to Haystock Island in a rubber boat watching the seals swim under the boat, and following the park regulations. Wink, wink. Witty's Lagoon was my playground growing up. To this day I walk my dog in the park almost every day.

### **Where were you born and where have you lived?**

I was born and raised in Metchosin. I still live in Metchosin, but the rest of my family has moved to Colwood and Langford. Great place to grow up and a great place to raise my two kids.

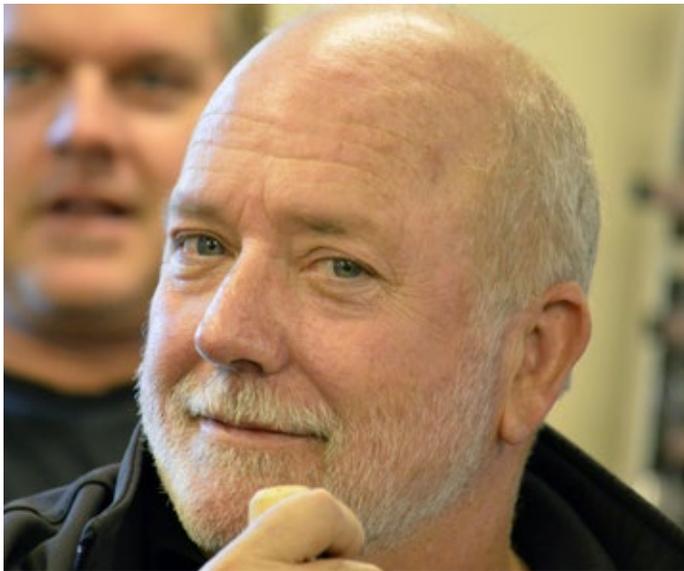
### **Tell us a bit about yourself.**

My wife Nicole and myself have raised two children there. Both are boys, one is now 19 years old and the other is 14 years old. Just recently Nicole and I got into paddle boarding, frequenting Matheson Lake and Thetis Lake.

# Volunteer & Park Updates

## Staff Retirements

2015 has seen a record number of staff retirements at Regional Parks. We were sad to see them go, as they all have contributed so much to Regional Parks over the years, but we are happy to see them embark on this next chapter of their lives. Look for them on your outings in the parks.



George Gollmer – Operations Supervisor, Regional Trails and Southern Gulf Islands, retired January 30, 2015 after 35 years of service.



Richard Waterfield – North Operations Supervisor, retired May 29, 2015 after 27 years of service.



Deb Thiessen – Parks Interpreter, retired June 30, 2015 after 25 years of service.



Nancie Dohan – Coordinator of Environmental Interpretation, retired August 25, 2015 after 6 years of service.

## Volunteer Recruitment

We are still in need of a few more year-round Volunteer Naturalists at the Nature Centre at Francis/King Regional Park in Saanich, and Witty's Lagoon Regional Park in Metchosin. Naturalists welcome, engage and help build awareness, understanding and appreciation of the natural and cultural environments in regional parks and trails. The commitment is a four-hour shift (12-4pm) monthly, on a Saturday or Sunday, year round. If you know of anyone interested, please have them contact Colleen Long: [clong@crd.bc.ca](mailto:clong@crd.bc.ca) or 250.360.3329. Details of the position can be found at [crd.bc.ca/parks](http://crd.bc.ca/parks) on our Volunteer page.