

What is the Conservation Partners Program?



The Conservation Partners Program (CPP), a province-wide initiative of The Land Conservancy, brings a collaborative approach to uniting ecological conservation with sustainable agriculture. The CPP has created a network of farmers who provide the inspiration for the 'stories' we tell about their holistic land management.

The program supports and promotes our partners – exemplar farmers, ranchers and vineyard operators who use their land not only to produce food, but also to protect natural habitat and biodiversity. In recognition of their commitment, our partners are distinguished by the butterfly label, a tool to inform the public about this community and its contribution to the long-term viability of food production and ecosystem health in BC.

For more information, contact 250-479-8053 or check out the website at www.conservancy.bc.ca.



merridale

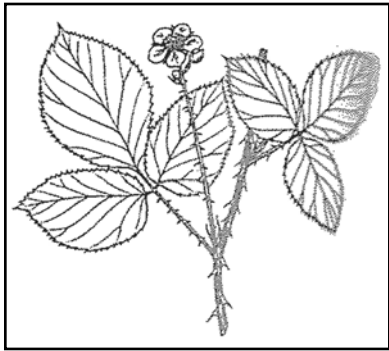


Merridale Self Guided Plant Walk



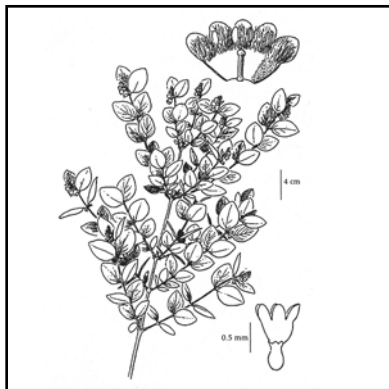
NOTES

13. Himalayan Blackberry



- Introduced invader!! Great for pies, bad for the survival of native plants!
- Erect to sprawling plant that often forms dense thickets
- Leaves are more or less evergreen; flowers are white to pinkish and blackberries are delicious!
- Introduced from India and widely dispersed in disturbed sites

14. Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*)



- Deciduous shrub with leaves that are elliptic to oval and 2-5cm long
- Flowers are pink to white and bell-shaped
- White berries grow in clusters and are persistent through winter
- Grows in dry to moist open forests, thickets and along beaches
- The white, waxy-looking berries are considered poisonous by First Nations People; however, one or two berries were sometimes eaten to settle the stomach after fatty foods

Merridale Cider Self-Guided Plant Walk

Merridale Cidery is a *TLC* Conservation Partner, as shown by the butterfly sign by the ciderhouse. Merridale is recognized as a Conservation Partner because the owners and staff are voluntarily stewarding the natural ecosystems and wildlife habitat on their agricultural land. This walk takes you alongside the natural protected area that surrounds the apple orchards.

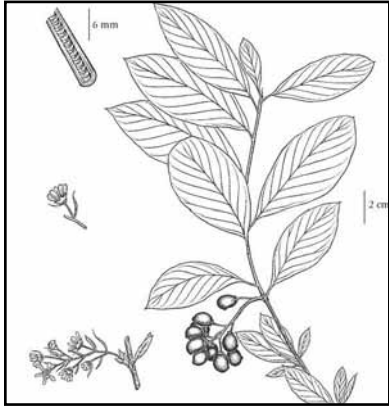
The Coastal Douglas-fir ecosystem that you are in right now, is a very diverse and interesting one. There are about 100 species of plants as well as a mix of wildlife in these coastal forests. The Douglas-fir forests were once common along the south-eastern coast of Vancouver Island but much of it has been cleared to make room for agriculture and human settlements. It is important to protect any small parcels of forest that are left to help to conserve native flora and fauna – thanks to Merridale for stewarding their forest and stream!

You may see Black-tailed deer in this area along with small mammals like marten, weasel, raccoon, red squirrel, bats, shrews and voles. More rarely seen are Roosevelt elk, black bear and cougars. The Cowichan area supports over 200 species of birds, including osprey, bald eagles, ravens, hawks, owls, ducks, herons and the estuary provides important winter habitat for thousands of waterfowl.

This native plant walk is designed to introduce visitors to the native trees and shrubs that you may find along the trail. Visitors will find stakes at intervals along the walk with numbers corresponding to the plant indicated on the map. We hope you enjoy this forest walk and learn something that enlightens or engages you with our beautiful vegetated world!

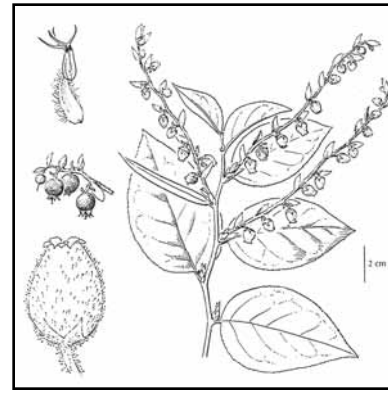
Please leave all plants so that they will be present for others to identify and enjoy. You may keep this pamphlet or return it to the box at the beginning of the trail.

1. Indian Plum



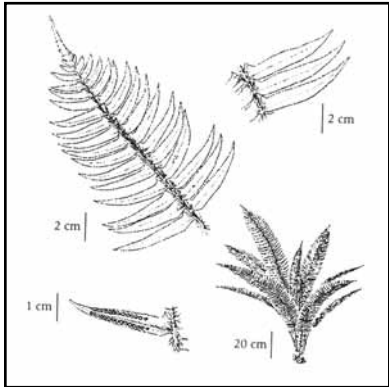
- Shrub or small tree with leaves that smell of cucumber when crushed
- One of the 1st plants to flower in the spring! White bell-shaped flowers with odd fragrance
- You will find this plant in a wide variety of areas – dry, moist, open woods, steambanks
- First Nation groups eat the bluish berries either fresh, cooked or dried – they can be quite bitter

10. Salal (*Gaultheria shallon*)



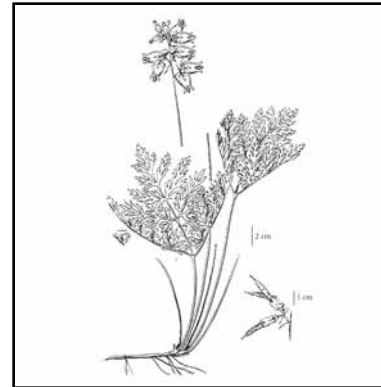
- Leaves evergreen, leathery and egg-shaped
- Flowers are white/pink
- Fruits are red-blue to dark purple berries and are edible (dry or fresh)
- Grows as a low shrub in coniferous forests
- Berries were often the most plentiful and important food for First Nations People

2. Sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*)



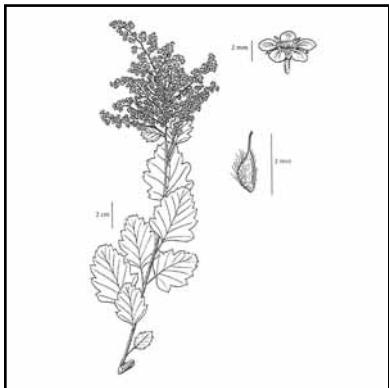
- Large, evergreen fern with erect leaves forming a crown
- Grows in moist forests at low to middle elevations; abundant on southern half of Vancouver Island
- The leaves were used by First Nations People as flooring and bedding

11. Pacific Bleeding heart (*Dicentra formosa*)



- Perennial herb with numerous, long-stalked, fern-like leaves
- Pinkish-purple, heart-shaped, drooping flowers
- Seed pods have an oil-rich appendage that is attractive to ants, who help to disperse the seed

3. Ocean Spray (*Holodiscus discolor*)



- Leaves are hairy and lobed or coarsely toothed
- Flowers are cream coloured and in clusters
- Plant found in dry to moist sites and open sites
- Ocean spray is commonly called 'iron wood' because of the hardness and strength of the wood, which was made even harder by heating it over a fire
- It was used to make digging sticks, spear and harpoon shafts and bow and arrow shafts by most coastal First Nations groups
- Recently it has been used for knitting needles

12. Stinging Nettle



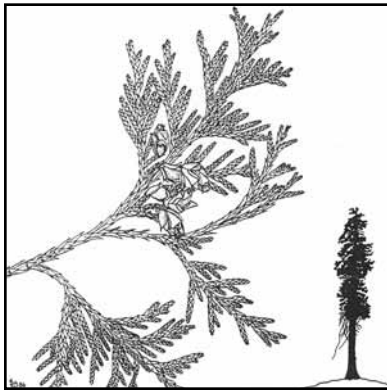
- The underside of the leaves and stems have 1000s of needle-like hairs that have formic acid which causes the stinging (same weaponry as red ants)
- Nettle reproduces from shallow rhizomes and may grow as tall as 7 feet
- You will find nettle in moist, rich soils, often along the road or in a riparian area
- Despite the sting, nettle is delicious and nutritious! Young plants are the most palatable and can be dried and made into tea, steamed or made into pesto (what would the Italians think?)

7. Scotch Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*)



- Invasive species and widespread on Vancouver Island
- Spindly branches and bright yellow flowers
- The black, flattened pods dry up and twist in separate directions, which eventually causes the pod to snap and catapult the seeds
- Broom likes disturbed sites, which is why you see it along the highway
- Introduced in 1850 from Scotland; was first planted in Sooke

8. Western Red Cedar (*Thuja plicata*)

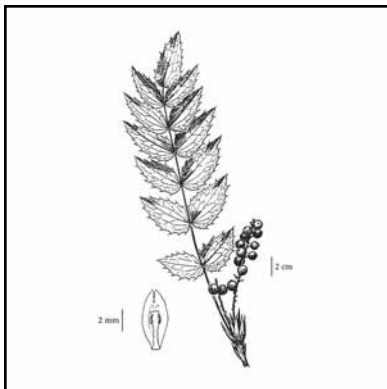


- Large coniferous tree, up to 60m tall; branches tend to spread or droop slightly and then turn upward
- Glossy, yellowish-green, scale-like leaves closely pressed to stem in overlapping shingled arrangement that looks like a flattened braid
- Very small egg-shaped, reddish seed cones
- Grows in moist to wet soils, usually in shaded forests at low to medium elevations
- One of the most important trees in First Nations culture; was called the ‘tree of life’ by the Kwakwaka’wakw

Easily split, rot-resistant wood was used to make nearly everything including dugout canoes, house planks, totem poles, baskets, clothing and hats

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9. Oregon grape (*Mahonia nervosa*)



- Evergreen shrub with stiff branches, leaves similar to holly
- Flowers are bright yellow
- Blue berries are edible but tart and sour!
- Grows in dry to moist, open to closed forests
- Common in second growth Douglas firs
- Today used in jelly and wine
- Shredded bark was used by First Nations People as a bright yellow dye

4. Big Leaf Maple (*Acer macrophyllum*)



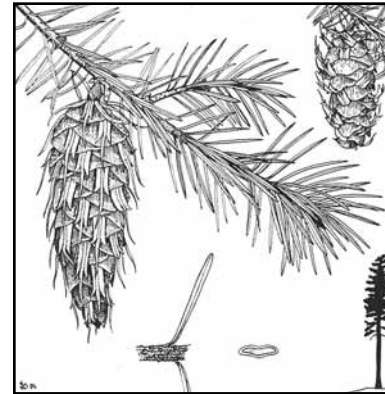
- Large deciduous tree; young bark is green and smooth; older bark is grey-brown, ridged and often covered with mosses, lichens and ferns
- Found in dry to moist sites, often with Douglas fir
- Carries a bigger load of mosses and other plants than any other tree in the region
- Maple is often called ‘paddle wood’ because it was used for making paddles
- The flowers are important food for honeybees

5. Skunk Cabbage



- This robust plant has a skunky odour when flowering; also called the Swamp Lantern
- Has large basal rosette leaves that surround the axis which is hooded by a bright yellow bract when in bloom.
- Found in swamps, wet forests and seepage areas
- This was the ‘wax paper’ for First Nations. They would make a berry paste, dry it on the leaves and peel it off like a fruit roll-up!

6. Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*)



- Large coniferous tree up to 70m tall; bark is very thick, fluted, ridged, rough and brown
- Needles are flat, yellowish-green, pointed tips, with one groove on upper surface and two white bands of stomata on lower surface
- Grows in a variety of sites, from extremely dry, low elevation sites to moist montane sites
- Wood used by First Nations People to make spear handles, harpoon shafts, spoons, and halibut hooks
- Pitch was used to seal joints and for caulking canoes
- Trees can live for over a thousand years



SELF GUIDED PLANT WALK

Legend:

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Indian Plum | 6. Douglas fir | 11. Bleeding heart |
| 2. Sword fern | 7. Scotch broom | 12. Stinging Nettle |
| 3. Ocean spray | 8. Western red cedar | 13. Himalayan blackberry |
| 4. Big leaf maple | 9. Oregon grape | 14. Snowberry |
| 5. Skunk Cabbage | 10. Salal | |