

# ACTIONS FOR HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

## Preserve: let forests grow old

- Preserve as many native trees on your property as possible. Should it be necessary or you decide to remove a tree or trees, first seek out the opinion of ecologically-experienced arborists / forest ecologists for best practices (e.g. removing a hazardous tree to a safe height to create a wildlife tree / snag, or removing limbs to create a safer situation).

## Restore: rewild and return habitat and natural systems

- Allow some areas to be messy and go a bit wild, while keeping any invasive plants under control.
- Boost biodiversity by planting flowering plants that attract wildlife like butterflies, bees, dragonflies, and hummingbirds.
- Plant native plants that are hardier and better adapted to the environment.
- Plant trees. Mature healthy trees help to clean the air and maintain healthy soil conditions. The right tree in the right place will provide shade and windbreaks for your home (reducing your cooling and heating costs) in addition to providing habitats for local wildlife. Choose native tree species wherever possible.













- Create and/or maintain water features on your property, including: ponds, streams, ditches, wetlands, seasonal wet-zones, etc.

- 🍃 Let natural debris (fallen trees and leaves) decompose in woodland areas. This creates habitat, retains moisture, and improves the soil.
  - Note: for fire safety, drop leaning fallen trees to the ground and if possible orient them across the slope. Collect small branches and create berms by piling into depressions, perpendicular to the slope. Cover with leaf litter, dirt, etc. This will help retain water and keep the ground damp.
- 🍃 Maintain and enhance existing and/or create new natural habitat: snags / logs, rock and/or brush piles, natural wetlands or creeks, wildflower meadows, etc.
- 🍃 Maintain and enhance existing and/or create new artificial habitat: bird feeders, owl boxes, mason bee homes, bat boxes, bee baths, etc.
  - Note: artificial animal homes / feeders need to be cleaned to be effective, otherwise they can be detrimental to local wildlife.
- 🍃 If you live beside the ocean, freshwater stream, pond, or wetland, plant a wide buffer of native trees and shrubs to provide habitat, shade, and food for young fish and other aquatic and marine species. The root systems will also help prevent shoreline erosion.
- 🍃 Minimize the amount of lawn you have. You will spend less time mowing the lawn, and will save money on watering. Instead, create low maintenance vegetation areas, using native ground covers and shrubs. These not only provide food for native wildlife such as birds and butterflies but also help maintain soil moisture conditions.



## **Protect: protect the land from species, pollutants, and other factors that may do harm**

- 🍃 Control invasive plants such as Scotch broom, English ivy, Himalayan blackberry, daphne laurel, and English holly.

-  Do not introduce any plants or animals that threaten or displace native species (e.g. potentially invasive nursery-grown plants, bull-frogs, pet-store turtles, etc.)
-  Keep your cat indoors or within a small fenced area. A free-roaming domestic cat can kill hundreds of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, butterflies, and other insects each year.
-  Create a deer exclusion zone to protect the land from overgrazing.
-  Minimize the use of impervious surfaces such as asphalt and concrete. This will allow rainwater to soak into the ground, which will help to maintain groundwater supplies and will protect the quality and quantity of water in nearby streams and wetlands.
-  Keep oil and other toxins out of ditches, wet areas, the ocean and wetlands including F.O.G.s (fats, oils, and greases from kitchen, painting, or auto repair) and dispose of them properly.
-  Use outdoor night-lighting that is wildlife friendly (e.g. motion activated and amber or green coloured bulbs or shades).
-  Maintain and protect soil with mulch and avoid removing plants on slopes that might increase erosion and pollute wetlands, creeks, or coastlines.
-  Avoid pesticides and synthetic fertilizers on lawn, flowers, or veggies; use alternative options as pest problems arise.
-  Use natural soil builders and enhancers, such as compost, bark mulch, twigs, and leaf litter.
  - Note: avoid raking up leaf litter too much in any area as that destroys habitat for many small species while also increasing erosion and fire risk.
-  Do not throw garden waste down slopes. This can cause the slope to become unstable, leading to slides and damage to your property as well as to fish habitat below.

- Never top healthy trees as this promotes tree diseases and increases hazards. Use selective pruning methods to enhance views and make the tree more windfirm.
- Protect our island's water quality for people and nature's critters by maintaining a healthy fringe of riparian vegetation around creeks, streams, ponds, wetlands, coastlines, and other water recharge / discharge areas on the property.
- Conserve water by collecting and storing rainwater, practicing efficient irrigation (e.g. drip), and allowing the lawn to go golden in drought summers. Also, keep your lawn at least 10 cm long to minimize irrigation needs and to prevent weed invasions.



## Learn: explore new ways to work alongside the land you live on

- Learn about your land: identify its natural features and the species that live there over the year.
- Learn more about the Indigenous Coast Salish values and ways of interacting and regarding all life and nature as equal and inseparable from our mind, body, and spirit.

