

Caring for your Conservation Covenant

*A newsletter for Islands Trust
Conservancy Covenant Landholders*



WINTER 2024/25

Reflections from the 2024 Field Season

In some ways the 2024 field season seemed “back to normal” for us here at Islands Trust Conservancy. Without pandemic restrictions and travel delays, we finally enjoyed the full breadth of the field season and in-person visits with many of you (and with 78 covenants to visit, more time is always welcome!). These visits gave us an opportunity not only to discuss the important business of caring for the land, but also to strengthen connection and just get to know each other better. Another source of this sense of normalcy came with the near-average rain in May and June, which provided some respite to vegetation and wetlands amidst a multi-year drought.

In another important way, this year felt very different. We lost three remarkable individuals from within our conservation community. In April, Doug Nelson of the Cottonwood Creek Covenant on North Pender Island passed away, far too young. Doug was inventive, enthusiastic, and had boundless energy for conservation work. He will be dearly missed. In May, we lost Nina Raginsky of Walter Bay NAPTEP Covenant on Salt Spring Island. Nina was one of our first NAPTEP covenant donors, and to her last days she was a spirited, outspoken advocate for conservation on Salt Spring and across the Salish Sea. Nina is remembered on page 5, alongside Rose Longini, donor of the Green Frog Farm and Longini covenants on Galiano Island, who passed away in September. Like Nina, Rose was an early proponent of conservation covenants and a pillar of the conservation community on the island she called home.

This year we were lucky to have University of Victoria Biology Co-op student, Emily McLean join our field team in the role of Conservation Technician. Emily’s positive attitude, enthusiasm for learning, and curiosity about all organisms was infectious. I hope you enjoy Emily’s article about the “weird” plants of our region on pg. 2-4 of this newsletter.

We were also very grateful to team up with the Habitat Acquisition Trust’s (HAT) Restoration Crew, who helped us tackle a variety of challenging invasive species infestations in seven covenants on three islands. You can learn more about the fine work of this crew on their blog: <https://hat.bc.ca/blog>. We hope to continue working with HAT to expand our stewardship efforts next year.

Looking ahead, we will be reaching out early in the new year about an effortless but meaningful way you can further support species at risk in covenanted lands. Stay tuned!

Wishing you a happy solstice and peaceful winter,

Gemma Green
Covenant Management & Outreach Specialist



Weird and Wonderful Plants

By Emily McLean, 2024 Conservation Technician Co-op Student

If you were asked to imagine a plant, what features would you picture?

Maybe you would envision broad green leaves basking in sunlight or a tall conifer with its needle-covered branches outstretched. Although these images would describe many plants, they do not capture the remarkable diversity within the Plant Kingdom. There are many weird and wonderful species that are often overlooked because they do not fit our typical mental image of a plant. Plants that grow in the understory shadows, often with more of a physical resemblance to a fungus, are scattered throughout our Coastal Douglas-fir forests if you know where and when to look. Let's dive into the strange world of plant oddities within the Island Trust Area!

Heterotrophic Plants

Most plants are considered photoautotrophic, meaning that they use photosynthesis to harness light from the sun to produce the energy necessary for their survival. However, some plants have evolved into heterotrophs, meaning they obtain their energy from other living things. The alternative means to obtain energy without the use of photosynthesis differs between species.

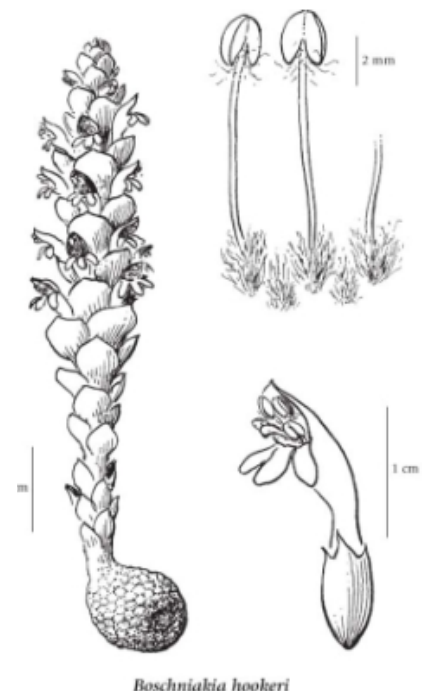
The Vancouver groundcone (*Kopsiopsis hookeri*) parasitizes other organisms for nutrients. This species feeds directly on the roots of salal and kinnikinnick using a modified root called a haustorium. Vancouver groundcones can be found flowering in spring amongst salal bushes. Fun fact: one groundcone plant can produce hundreds of thousands of seeds!

Photoautotroph

Photo: light

Auto: self

Troph: nutrients



Illustrated Flora of British Columbia:
Volume 8: General Summary, Maps
and Keys by George W. Douglas, Del
Meidinger, and Jim Pojar

Ghost pipe (*Monotropa uniflora*) is considered a myco-heterotroph, meaning that it gets its nutrients from exploiting the symbiotic relationship between photosynthetic plants and mycorrhizal fungi. The ghost pipe extracts nutrients from the fungus, which were exchanged fairly with a photosynthetic plant, but contributes nothing in return. In the coastal forests, the photosynthetic plant is typically a cedar tree, while the mycorrhizal fungus is usually a type of *Russula*. The parasitic lifestyle of the ghost pipe has led to the loss of chlorophyll in its plant tissue resulting in a ghostly white appearance. Ghost pipe grows throughout the Trust Area, and is typically found flowering in mature, organics-rich forest soils from June to September.

Mycorrhizal fungus

Fungus that exchanges nutrients with surrounding plants and connects the forest's root systems.

Chlorophyll

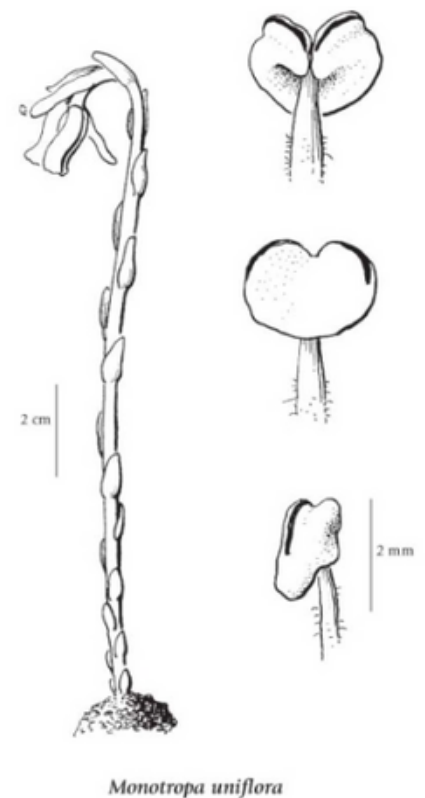
Chlorophyll is a natural compound found in plant cells that captures light energy from the sun and converts it into sugars. Chlorophyll is what makes many plants green!



A patch of Ghost pipe (*Monotropa uniflora*) found on Saturna Island in late June 2024. Photo: Emily McLean

The Importance of Weird and Wonderful Plants

Parasitic plants may seem weird, but they are indicators of a healthy, functioning ecosystem. Their presence increases biodiversity within the plant community and provides food opportunities for pollinators and other herbivores. Many parasitic plants also hold cultural significance for Indigenous Peoples of coastal British Columbia. For example, the Vancouver groundcone, or p'ukw'es in Kwakwaka'wakw language, was traditionally eaten by Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuu-chah-nulth, and possibly other coastal Indigenous People. It was also used as a good luck charm by people of the central coast.



Illustrated Flora of British Columbia:
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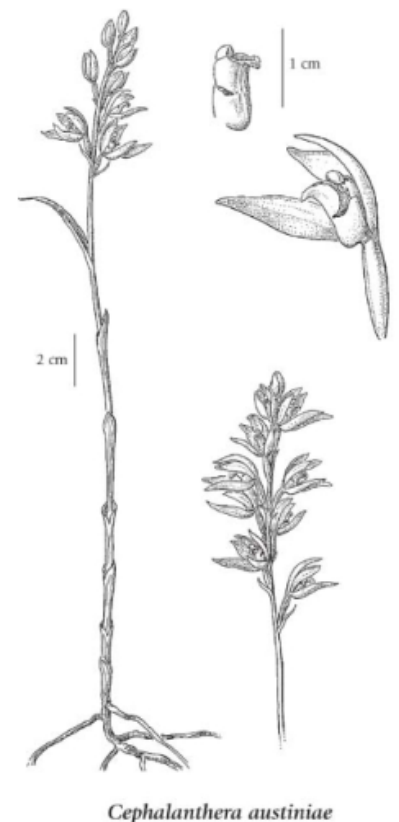
What Can You Do to Help “Weird” Plants?

Many parasitic plants across North America, like ghost pipe, are sensitive to disturbance and require mature second-growth forests to flourish. Loss of habitat is a major threat to these plants because they require specific conditions, like an undisturbed soil microbiome or a certain host plant, to reproduce successfully. There are many species of parasitic plants in the Trust Area that are considered species at risk, like the phantom orchid (*Cephalanthera austiniiae*) and Ozette coralroot. Thanks to conservation-minded landholders like yourself, habitat needed to sustain these species can be protected through conservation covenants.

A great way to contribute further to conservation efforts in our area is to record your observations of species using citizen science apps like iNaturalist. This information helps build understanding of the lifecycles and geographic distribution of these plants. We hope this introduction to some of the Trust Area’s wonderfully weird plants will give you another reason to enjoy the biodiversity in your backyard.



Ozette Coralroot (*Corallorhiza maculata* var. *ozettensis*) found on Salt Spring Island in early June 2024.
Photo: Emily McLean



Cephalanthera austiniiae

Illustrated Flora of British
Columbia: Volume 8:
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To join Islands Trust Conservancy’s iNaturalist Project for Conservation Covenants,
visit our [project webpage](#) or email itcmail@islandstrust.bc.ca.

islandstrust.bc.ca/conservancy/protect-nature/care-for-your-land/citizen-science/



In Memoriam

By Micaela Yawney, Communications Specialist

Rose Longini, Green Frog Farm & Longini covenants, Galiano Isl.

Rose Longini, organic farmer and donor of the Green Frog Farm and Longini covenants on Galiano Island, passed away in September. Rose cared deeply about the land and protecting nature, and we are sad to lose her. In 1990, when Rose bought the 80-acre lot that would eventually become the two covenants, she had just moved to the Gulf Islands from the city. Over time, she learned more about the land and quickly fell in love with the ecosystems, habitats, and diversity of species that exist there. "I was now living in a landscape which I couldn't feel I 'owned' in the same sense that I had owned a house and lot in the city. A sense of responsibility for my land and for the whole island ecosystem began to grow." In 2001, Rose subdivided her property, keeping 60 acres of ALR land for her farm and supporting ecosystems; however, she wanted to ensure that the habitat would remain intact and ancient trees protected no matter who owned the lots in the future. With the help of Islands Trust Conservancy and the Galiano Conservancy Association, she placed covenants on both properties. Rose's legacy will continue to live on through the protection of land that provides a beautiful sanctuary where ecosystems and species can flourish forever.

Nina Raginsky, Walter Bay NAPTEP Covenant, Salt Spring Island



Nina Raginsky, donor of the Walter Bay NAPTEP Covenant on Salt Spring Island, passed away on May 17th. Nina was a lifelong advocate for the natural world and was widely honored and acknowledged for her work as a photographer and artist. Nina was a fierce, generous, and loving woman who spoke for the species and landscapes that have no voice, drawing people's attention to what needed protection and care. Her deep commitment to environmental protection was evident through her efforts as a citizen scientist in working with the Wild Bird Trust to protect McFadden Creek, advocating for the protection of oystercatcher nests, hosting tea parties with developers and community members to invite communication on divisive issues, and protecting her beloved waterfront property, which contributed to a larger provincial and federal effort to protect Walter Bay. Nina's ongoing advocacy and environmental stewardship throughout her life demonstrated that one person's efforts can have a huge impact on conservation. Nina will be deeply missed.

Ways to Further Your Conservation Impact



Share Your Story

Many of you have already made a conservation impact, either by placing a conservation covenant on your property, actively caring for the covenant lands, or making other financial or volunteer contributions to conservation in your community. You can further this impact by sharing your story and inspiring others to take action. Tell your friends about what you did and why you did it, or reach a broader audience by connecting with ITC's Communications Specialist, Micaela Yawney at myawney@islandstrust.bc.ca, who can work with you to amplify your message through Islands Trust Conservancy's social media or a feature in our quarterly newsletter, The Heron.

Satisfaction Survey

Help us understand your satisfaction in having protected land with a conservation covenant or purchased property protected by a conservation covenant.

Your response will help Islands Trust Conservancy improve our covenant programs for all landholders in the Islands Trust Area.

Please take our short (5-minute) survey:

www.surveymonkey.com/r/covholdersatisfaction



Survey deadline: January 27, 2025

Questions or additional comments? Email jgreen@islandstrust.bc.ca.

Legacy Giving

When thinking about your legacy, you don't have to choose between your family and your love of nature!

As little as 1% of your estate can help protect the incredible biodiversity and landscapes of the islands in the Salish Sea.



Only \$175,000 in grants to projects has led to conservation protection for a whopping \$58,000,000 in appraised land value! You can bequeath cash, land, stock, or insurance, and your estate will receive a tax receipt for the amount donated.

Start a legacy and give back to this very special part of the world. Learn more at islandstrust.bc.ca/conservancy/how-you-can-help/planning-your-legacy/.

We Want to Hear from You

This newsletter is written exclusively for you, ITC's community of conservation covenant landholders, with the purpose to inform and inspire. What do YOU want to read about in a future issue of this newsletter? Send your suggestions to stewardship@islandstrust.bc.ca.

