

Stewardship Tips



Islands Trust

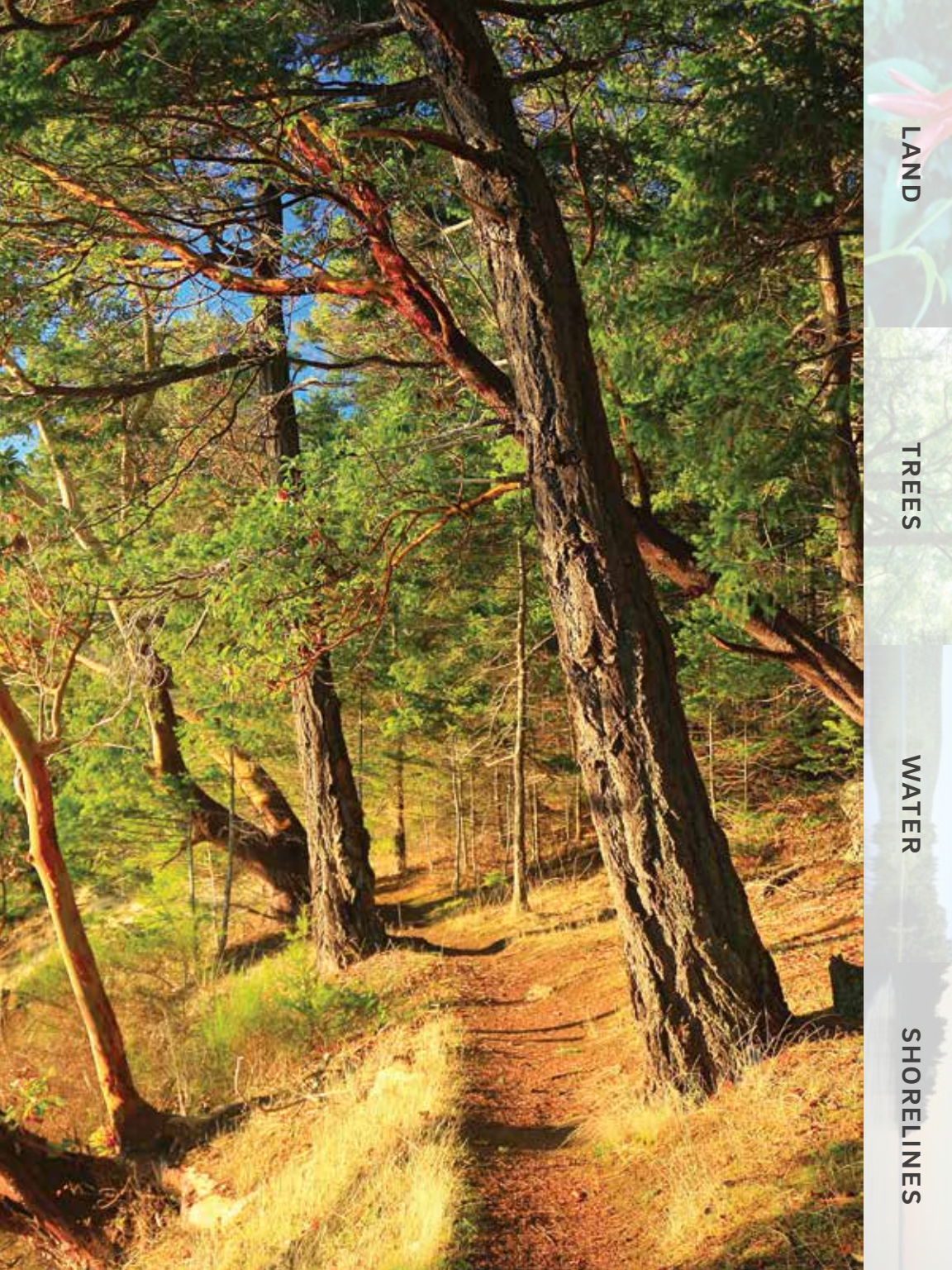
Living on the islands, you will make many decisions about how you use, enjoy, and care for your property.

With over 67% of land in the Trust Area privately owned, residents have an important role to play in protecting and stewarding this special place. The maintenance, building and landscaping decisions you make affect your energy use, drought and flood resistance, windbreaks, and fire protection. The decisions you make can also impact plants and animals in your environment, cultural sites, and affect the region's ability to withstand the impacts of climate change.



Encompassing the waters and islands of the Salish Sea between southern Vancouver Island and the mainland, the Islands Trust Area has been home to Indigenous Peoples since time immemorial. The region features spectacular beauty, extensive cultural sites, and some of the world's most precious and endangered ecosystems.





LAND

TREES

WATER

SHORELINES



The Trust Area is situated within the territories of the Coast Salish Peoples and includes many gathering places, village sites and cultivated harvesting areas, dating back over 14,000 years.

Get to Know the Land

Plan ahead: identify environmental values and ensure protection of cultural sites before site clearing, planning, and design.



LAND

Locate development (new buildings, driveways, landscaping and septic systems) away from areas of cultural significance or with high environmental value, like shorelines, wetlands, rare ecosystems (such as Garry oak meadows), and wildlife trees.

Cluster development in one area to minimize site disturbance, protect natural areas, and save money.

Remove invasive species that can out-compete native species. Invasive plants can also pose threats to human and animal health, fuel wildfires, and devalue a property.



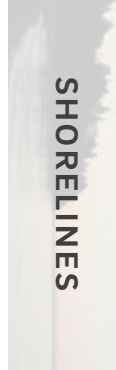
TREES



▲ American bushtit
(*Psaltriparus minimus*)



WATER



SHORELINES

Think About the Trees

Healthy forests are vibrant, diverse ecological communities with rich environmental and community values. They are also among the islands' greatest natural assets for climate change resilience and water protection.

Minimize tree cutting and soil disturbance. The islands' trees and soils have vital ecological and climate values, important to both people and wildlife.

Protect forests on your property to support their key functions in providing wildlife habitat, absorbing carbon, and storing rainwater. Healthy forests protect against extreme wildfires, drought, and flooding.



▲ Sharp-tailed snake
(*Contia tenuis*)

If you do have to address hazard trees, consider leaving the trunk behind to provide shelter and food for wildlife.

Are there any eagle, heron or other raptor nests on your property? These nests are protected by legislation. Section 34 of the B.C. Wildlife Act prohibits interference with nesting trees of raptors, whether or not the nests are active.

To minimize fire risks, all branches <12.5cm diameter (can be considered fine fuels) should be removed offsite, while larger sizes may be retained but must be separated from other woody debris by 3m. Retained logs or large branches should be bucked, with the cut branches removed offsite, so they lay flat and in contact with the ground to help improve soil nutrients and moisture retention. Beyond 10m and up to 30m distance from a structure, some fallen trees, logs, and large branches may be left on the ground as habitat for plants, insects, amphibians, reptiles, small mammals, and birds.



Water is Essential and in Short Supply

Natural areas that hold and filter rainwater, such as healthy forests, meadows and wetlands, help protect the islands' precious groundwater.

Observe the way water flows over the land and design any landscaping and development to maintain natural drainage patterns.

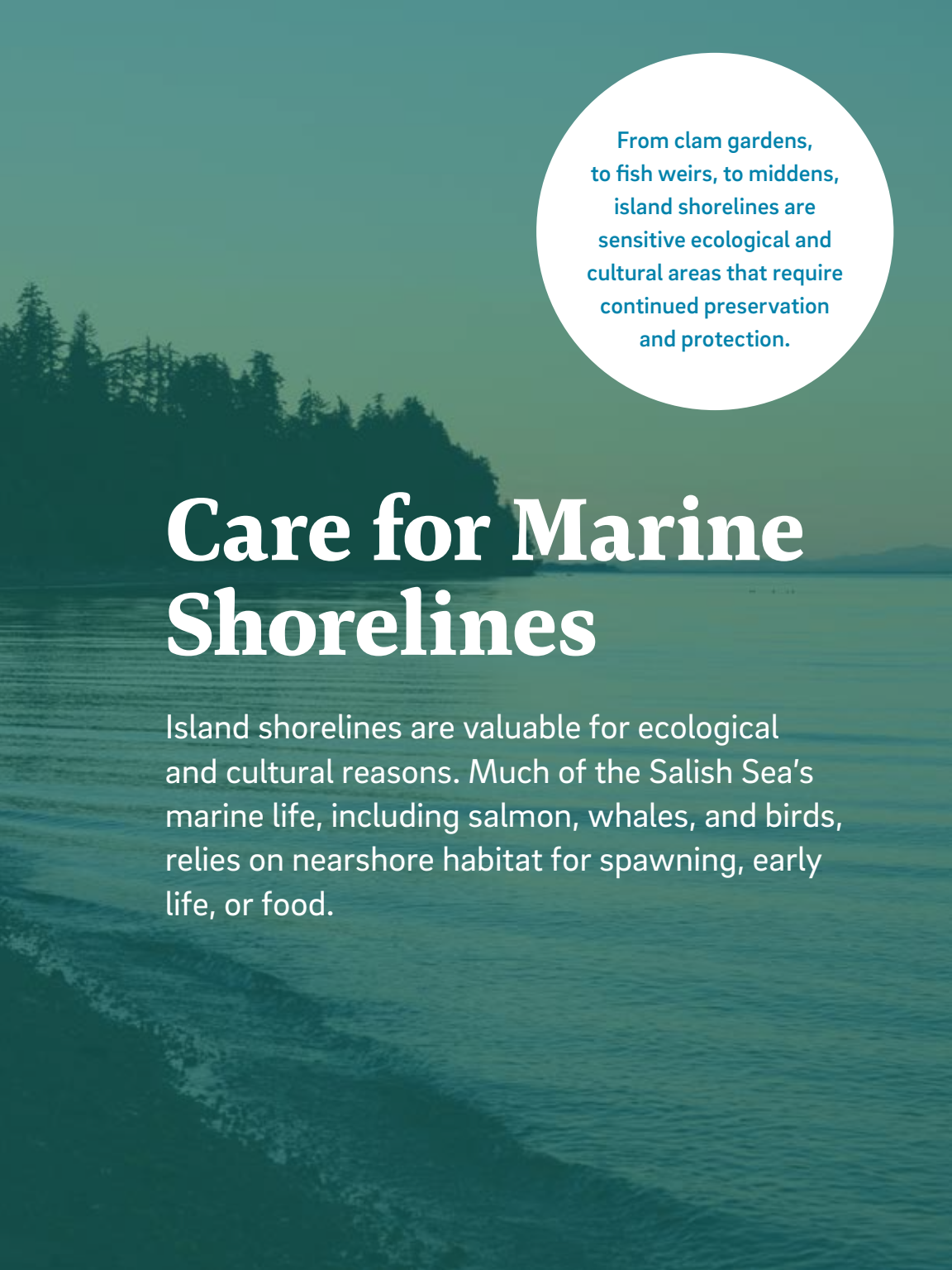
Landscape with native, drought-hardy plants and shrubs, rather than water-demanding lawns and ornamentals.

Minimize the use of hard impervious surfaces, such as concrete, that promote runoff and negatively impact water infiltration into soils and groundwater reservoirs.

Convert portions of existing lawn or landscaping to rain gardens, designed to hold, filter and slowly release surface water runoff from roads, roofs, or other impervious structures into the landscape.

If your property has a stream or wetland, retain a protective buffer of native trees and vegetation around it.





From clam gardens, to fish weirs, to middens, island shorelines are sensitive ecological and cultural areas that require continued preservation and protection.

Care for Marine Shorelines

Island shorelines are valuable for ecological and cultural reasons. Much of the Salish Sea's marine life, including salmon, whales, and birds, relies on nearshore habitat for spawning, early life, or food.

Locate residences and infrastructure further inland to reduce the need for shoreline protection. Avoid hard shoreline structures, such as seawalls, riprap and retaining walls, that can harm fish and wildlife, and which may not prevent erosion.

Consider 'soft' shoreline designs to reduce erosion, which use natural vegetation, logs, and low slopes to stabilize soils and provide upland drainage and habitat.

Protect critical seagrass habitat. Seagrasses are incredible carbon sinks, provide habitat for fish and wildlife, and protect shorelines from damaging wave action. Consider sharing a dock among several neighbours to reduce the loss of these important ecosystems.



▲ Smolts in sea grass
TAVISH CAMPBELL

Protect Nature

Join the growing community of island landowners who are creating a natural legacy for the future. Consider donating a covenant (easement) on your property if there are ecologically or culturally valuable areas that you want to protect permanently. Conservation covenants are registered on title and can give you significant tax benefits.



Visit Islands Trust Conservancy to learn more ways to protect nature on the land you love



Discover locations of sensitive ecosystems and protected places near you on Islands Trust's mapping platform



Find land stewardship resources to care for habitat, garden with native plants and protect against invasive plants

Contact Islands Trust for more information on natural areas stewardship, protection of cultural and archaeological sites, as well as land-use zoning bylaws that can affect your plans to use and develop your property.

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