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April 2022 Issue

FREE THE FERN

Community connection through  
environmental stewardship

## Signs of Spring

by [Grace Nombrado](#)

Cool, rainy days have given way to the occasional warm, sunny day. Birds are beginning to gather twigs for their nests. Ferns are poking their little fiddleheads up from the forest floor. And bright green leaves are brightening the trail edge. Spring is in the air! Let's take a moment to celebrate the beauty of this season.

### **Osoberry/Indian Plum**



The [Osoberry](#) is one the first native shrubs to flower on the Champlain Heights trail. Its beautiful clusters of white flowers, crowned with bright green leaves, create a beautiful cascade as you walk along the trail. Later, in June, this shrub will start to produce little edible plums (which start out yellow and darken to a deep blue when ripe and ready to eat).

### **Bracken fern fiddleheads**



The [bracken fern](#) is a deciduous fern that grows wild beneath our Douglas fir trees. By mid-March bracken ferns begin to sprout new fiddleheads. The shape of the fiddleheads have been likened to an eagle's clenched talon. Although there is some controversy over whether the fiddleheads should be eaten, [due to the presence of Ptaquiloside, a known carcinogen](#), many still enjoy this plant as a spring delicacy, often fried in butter and lemon.

### **Pacific bleeding heart**



[Pacific bleeding heart](#) is a lovely little native perennial flower that grows under the shade of the forest canopy. Over the winter this plant appears to die off, and it is always a delight to see its delicate, fern-like leaves begin to reemerge in the spring. After the bleeding heart finishes leafing out, tiny, heart-shaped pink flowers will appear.

### **Tall Oregon grape**



The [tall Oregon grape](#) is a native evergreen shrub that is often mistaken for the invasive English holly. Despite some similarities in leaf and overall shrub shape, the two plants have some distinct differences. Firstly, while the English holly leaves

grow in alternate arrangement, the tall Oregon grape's leaves grow in an opposite arrangement. Also, while the English holly has poisonous red berries, the tall Oregon grape produces edible purple berries in grape-like clusters. At this time of year, the tall Oregon grape is making a showy appearance of bright yellow flowers blooming in brilliant clusters at its crown.

### **Red flowering currant**



Finally, the spring showstopper is our native [red flowering currant](#). As their name implies, they are best known for their beautiful deep pink or red cascades of flowers. Red flowering currant provides early spring nectar for hummingbirds and nesting sites or cover for songbirds and small mammals. Later, in the summer, the red flowering currant produces sweet, purple edible berries.

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THIS MONTH'S

OTHER STORIES

## **Outdoor Learning for Kids**



On **March 4, 2022** Free the Fern founder, Grace Nombrado, guided a class of grade 1/2 students on a tour of the Champlain Heights trail system.

Meeting outside the Champlain Heights Elementary school, Grace introduced the students to the idea of “[plant blindness](#)” and how the cure for it is curiosity. The students were encouraged to stop at many points along the walk and observe and ask questions about the plants they saw.

Together they explored a variety of invasive and native plants, including: paper birch tree, English holly, osoberry, tall Oregon grape, sword fern and others. A visual PDF summary of the walk can be found [here](#).

Grace will be continuing her nature walk with the students on Earth Day, April 22.

## Weeding & Weaving



On **Saturday, March 5, 2022**, Free the Fern members Grace & Joe, organised a **Weeding & Weaving** event on Fir Trail, just north of the Kinross Creek Co-op. 10 volunteers gathered to remove invasive English ivy & Himalayan blackberry. Volunteers succeeded in removing 2,640 L (9 city green bins) worth of invasives.

After a break for tea & cookies, some volunteers chose to continue removing invasives, while others received instruction on how to weave ivy into baskets. Joe & Grace (who previously completed a workshop on basket weaving with the [Still Moon Arts Society](#)) led the ivy weaving demo. Volunteers were shown how to cross 6 woody ivy “stakes” and interweave flexible, green ivy “weavers” to create a basket. Volunteers were excited to learn a new skill and create something useful from invasive plants.

## **Invasive Pull & BBQ**

On **Saturday, April 2, 10am-12pm**, Free the Fern member, Martin, will be hosting an **Invasive Pull & BBQ**. The pull will take place at the “invasive triangle” where the Red Alder trail forks, between Cartier Place & Matheson Heights Co-op. Volunteers will be removing invasive ivy & Himalayan blackberry.

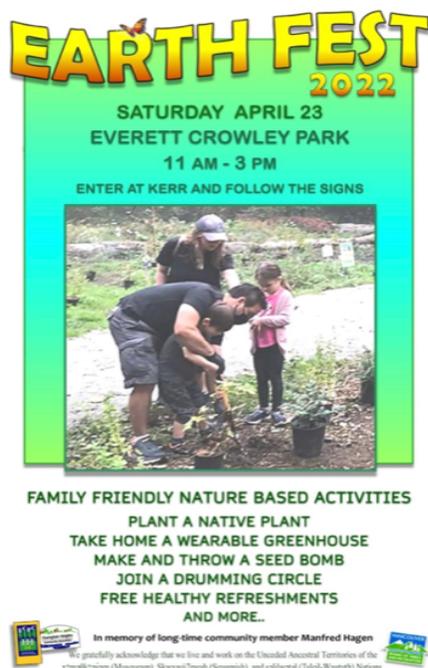
Following the pull, Martin will lead a tour of his stewardship area, adjacent to Alexander Laidlaw Co-op, at S E. Marine Drive. He is excited to show everyone his Gary oak trees and their associated blooming perennial flowers. Afterwhich, he will

be hosting an outdoor BBQ. If you are interested to attend, please email Martin at [jmartincollins59@gmail.com](mailto:jmartincollins59@gmail.com)

## BeAware Fair

On **Wednesday, April 13, 9:30-1pm**, Free the Fern members, Grace, Joe, & Martin, will be guest speakers at the **BeAware Fair** hosted by Carson Graham Secondary in North Vancouver. As part of Climate & Sustainability Action Week, this fair will be an opportunity for 1300+ students to learn and take climate action. We will share Free the Fern's stewardship effort, provide education on invasive & native plants, and demonstrate how ivy can be made into baskets.

## Earth Fest



Free the Fern will be participating in **Earth Fest** at Everett Crowley Park on Saturday, **April 23, 2022, 11-4pm**. We will have an information table to sign up new volunteers, demonstrate basket weaving with ivy, and share future plans with the community.

## Spring Planting



Free the Fern is excited to announce that [Environmental Youth Alliance \(EYA\)](#) will be donating 70 native plants to us for planting along the Champlain Heights Trail System this spring!

In addition, we have ordered 20 dull Oregon grape, 4 salal and 5 sword fern plants from [Nat's Nursery](#). They will be planted in the “invasive triangle” where the Red Alder trail forks. These plants have been funded through our [Art for Plants Fundraiser](#).

We hope to have a much larger fall planting event in October, where we will plant hundreds more native plants along the trail.

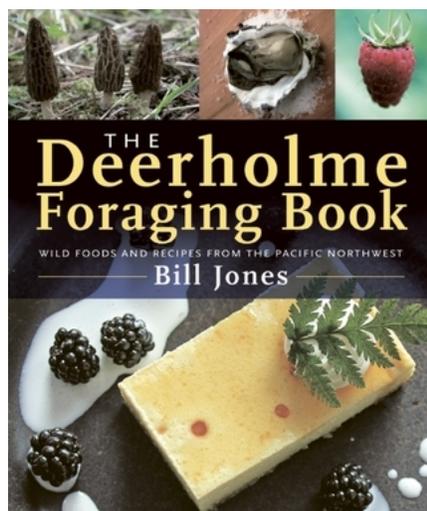
## South Van Strawberry Social



We are excited to announce that, thanks to a [Neighbourhood Small Grant](#) and support from the [Kinross Creek Co-op](#) Social Committee, Free the Fern will be organising a **South Van Strawberry Social** on **Sunday, June 5, 1-4pm**. The event will be the official opening for our Douglas Fir Teaching Garden. Last fall we planted hundreds of native plants into three plots in the garden: ferns, berries, and flowers. We will have signage in the garden and people can walk and learn about the native plants. In addition, there will be free strawberries from [Emma Lea Farms](#) as well as shortcake. In addition, local vendors will be selling their handmade crafts and local musicians will be performing music. If you are interested in signing up as a vendor or performing music at our event, please reach out to us at [freethefern@gmail.com](mailto:freethefern@gmail.com)

## Free the Fern Lending Library

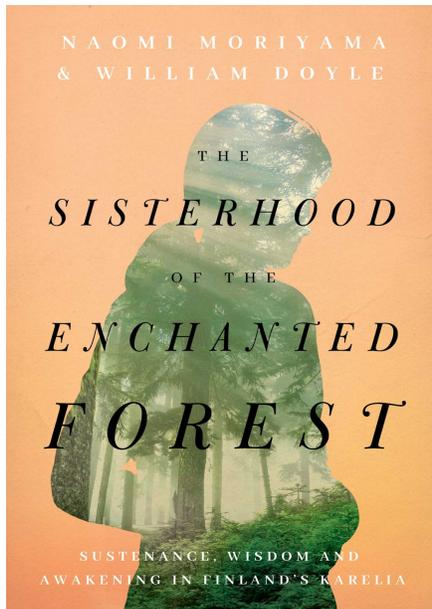
We have several new books available for loan through our [Free the Fern lending library](#).



### [The Deerholme Foraging Book: Wild Foods and Recipes from the Pacific Northwest](#)

By Bill Jones

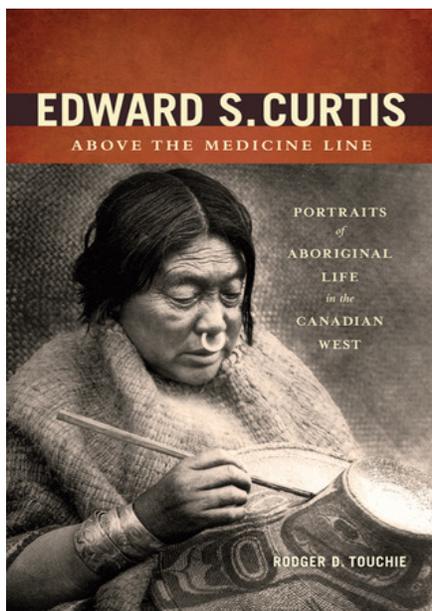
*The Deerholme Foraging Book is an exploration of the wild foods found in the Pacific Northwest. It is written by award-winning chef and author Bill Jones and features local mushrooms, edible plants, sea vegetables, and shellfish.*



## [The Sisterhood of the Enchanted Forest](#)

by Naomi Moriyama

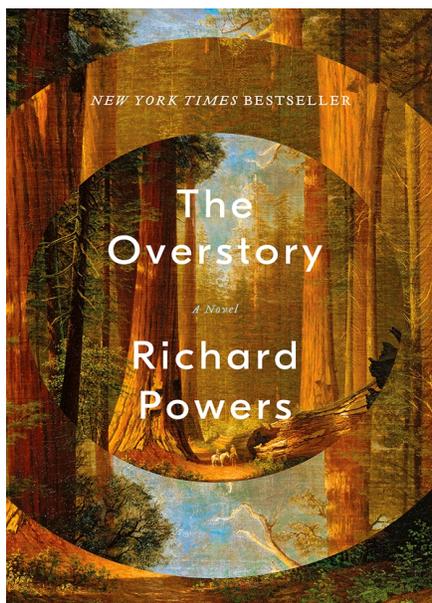
*What would happen if you built one of the world's most advanced societies inside a forest—and strove to make women full partners in power?*



## [Edward S. Curtis: Above the Medicine Line](#)

by Rodger D. Touchie

First Nations people had been decimated due to the diseases and aggressions of white settlers. In 1899 photographer, Edward S. Curtis, alarmed that traditional ways of life were in danger of disappearing forever, began a nearly 30 year quest to capture the first people's daily routines, character and dignity through photography and audio recordings.



## [The Overstory](#)

by Richard Powers

*The Overstory is a sweeping, impassioned work of activism and resistance that is also a stunning evocation of the natural world. From the roots to the crown and back to the seeds, Richard Powers's twelfth novel unfolds in concentric rings of interlocking fables that range from antebellum New York to the late twentieth-century Timber Wars of the Pacific Northwest and beyond.*

Our complete Free the Fern library catalogue can be viewed on [goodreads](#). If you are interested to borrow any of our titles, please contact us at [freethefern@gmail.com](mailto:freethefern@gmail.com)

## **Purpose of Free the Fern**

At our last Free the Fern meeting, on March 30, 2022, members unanimously voted to approve the following purpose for Free the Fern:

***To restore the ecology of the Champlain Heights trail system by removing invasive plants and replanting native plants***

***To promote environmental stewardship through community engagement and education***

Approving this purpose is the first step towards Free the Fern becoming a not-for-profit society. We hope to complete not-for-profit society registration by the end of 2022.

## **Stats**

We ask that all volunteers (who complete stewardship work along the Champlain Heights Trail system) please track your volunteer hours. Our tracking form can be found on our [Free the Fern website](#) under the “volunteer” tab [here](#).

Between January 1, 2022 and April 1, 2022, **21** Free the Fern volunteers have: spent **145 hours** pulling invasive weeds, raking leaves, replanting native plants, moving leaf mulch, and hosting events. Together we removed **88 city green bins (31,200L or 11 tons)** of **English ivy (50%)**, **Himalayan blackberry (38%)**, **lamium (5%)**, **Italian arum (3%)**, **common periwinkle (3%)**, and **English holly (1%)**. Amazing work everyone!

## **Next Meeting**



Our next members meeting will be held on:

**Wednesday, April 27, 2022 at 7-8pm.**

A reminder and link will be sent out to members closer to the date.

[READ MORE ON OUR WEBSITE](#)



Free the Fern.

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