

Free the Fern Stewardship Society 2023-02-09 Public Outreach Session Minutes 7:00-8:00pm

Host: Grace Nombrado (President of Free the Fern Stewardship Society)

Minutes: Erin Knock (Director at Large, Free the Fern Stewardship Society)

Number of Attendees present: 8

Executive Summary: Free the Fern Stewardship Society (“Free the Fern”) is a non-profit organization dedicated to restoring the ecology along the trail system in Champlain Heights and promoting environmental stewardship through community engagement and education. Thanks to the award of a Neighborhood Matching Fund from the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, Free the Fern is planning to install a native food forest in the area of the red alder trail.

Agenda: Please see the attached presentation for details

What is a food forest?

Where it will be?

Who will it benefit?

How you can get involved

Question and Answer Period

Q: Are kids welcome?

A: Yes, kids are welcome at invasive pulls and planting events as long as they are supervised. For basket weaving, they need more dexterity so it is recommended for older kids (greater than 14yrs). Bird nesting cages can be made working together with a child. Native plant walks are open to all ages.

Q: How long did it take to get this far and how many people are involved at this time?

A: Everything started in January 2021 with Grace pulling ivy on her own and others joining in over time. In August 2022 we officially registered as a non-profit society. We have 9 board directors, 17 active members and over 100 people who have volunteered over the course of the last 2 years. We have removed 127,000L of invasive species and planted 1,300 native plants. More members are always welcome!

Q: Do the 10 events include the invasive pulls?

A: Yes

Q: Does the land (designated for the native food forest) belong to the co-ops or to the park board?

A: Actually neither, the land belongs to the City of Vancouver and is managed by the Engineering Department who also care for the roads. It is not considered a park system. We have gotten the Engineering Department's support for the work we are doing. The Engineering Department runs the Green Streets program and has designated our trail areas as part of that program. Our board members are Green Streets members.

Q: How do we support the soil's health during or after planting? An offer was made to supply natural compost material.

A: Donations of natural soil amenders are always welcome. We always provide acknowledgement for donations on our social media accounts.

So far we have added leaf mulch to some areas in the fall. Fern fronds were also added to some of the smaller plant beds to prevent drying. Some wood chip mulch was added around some of the trees. The park donates wood mulch from time to time. We have also purchased seasoil from Garden Works (Burnaby)..

Q: How do we protect the area from dogs?

A: Use of fallen branches or logs to edge the planting area mostly stops dogs from entering. The dogs tend to mark the wood edging instead of the plants themselves. We also educate people in the area not to let dogs trample the new planting and provide areas clear of plants for walking trails when appropriate. Finally, all plantings are done greater than 1 meter away from the trail.