



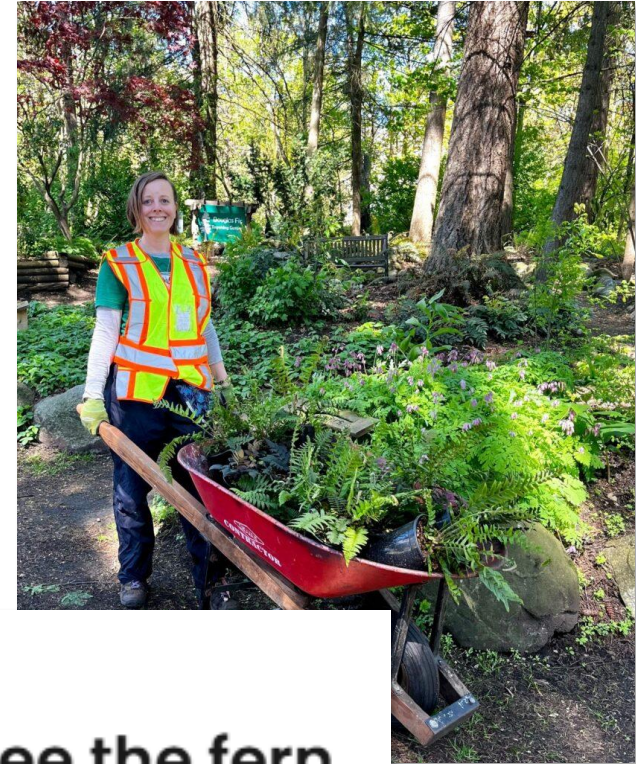
Healing Forest Case Study: Douglas Fir Teaching Garden.

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Acknowledgements

Thank you to Grace Nombrado, Founder and Executive Director of Free the Fern Stewardship Society for meeting with us!

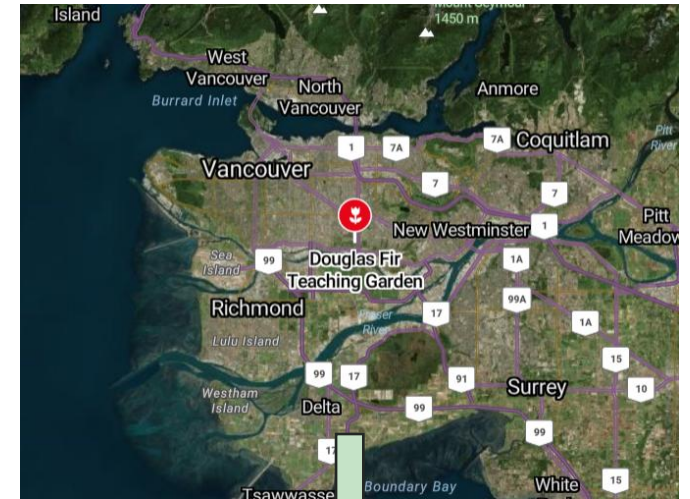
- All information used for our presentation is attributed to Grace or Free the Fern's website.
- All photos are attributed to Free the Fern's website and social media.



free the fern

Douglas Fir Garden Background

- A patch of forest in the neighbourhood of Champlain Heights, along the Red Alder Trail in Vancouver, British Columbia.
- Inspiration and Founding
 - Originally landscaped by Doug Hollick, who wanted to create a relaxing space for the community, until his passing in 2006.
 - Locals started calling it “Doug’s Garden” in his honour.
 - Grace Nombrado noticed invasive ivy while cleaning the area after a storm in 2021 and started removing it.
 - Community members joined, turning it into a restoration effort.
 - Grace founded Free the Fern (FTF), with hopes to use her experience as a teacher to create a learning space for the community.
- Engagement with the City
 - The project later gained city support and funding and received official recognition as a Healing Forest in 2022.



Douglas Fir Garden Vision

The Douglas Fir Teaching Garden envisions a thriving biodiverse ecosystem within the Champlain Heights Trail System. Through hands-on restoration efforts and educational initiatives, the Douglas Fir Teaching Garden inspires people of all abilities and backgrounds to connect with nature and fosters a community of environmental stewards.



Douglas Fir Garden Current Plan

- Invasive species removal
 - Removal of English ivy, Italian arum, and Common periwinkle.
- Native species planting
 - Ferns, berries, and flowers.
- Collaboration
 - Partnerships with the City of Vancouver, local artists, and Indigenous Peoples.
- Community education
 - Workshops.
 - Special events.
- Reconciliation
 - Partnerships with local indigenous artists and knowledge sharers.
 - Dedicated Elder in Residence.



Douglas Fir Garden 5 Year Plan

- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion policy
 - Continue to focus on all types of barriers.
 - Ongoing commitment to being more welcoming and inclusive.
- Nature is for Everyone
 - Inclusion of different sectors of the community that might have barriers to participation in stewardship.
- Focusing on a group/demographic each year
 - Programs targeted toward children.
 - Program targeted toward seniors.



Key Achievements

"Now the city says they haven't seen a stewardship project as successful as this" - Grace Nombrado, Founder and executive director.

- Designated Healing Forest – August 2022
 - In 2023, an entire Healing Forest program and plan was made intentionally to create a community gathering place.
- Welcoming learning space
 - Indigenous knowledge sharing and educational events/workshops fostered further community engagement, where people can learn together.
 - Events/workshops:
 - Bird Walk
 - Invasive Pull
 - Native Plant Sale
 - Winter Plant Walk
 - Light up the Night
 - Making Friends with Fungi Walk



Key Achievements

- Community Engagement
 - Non-profit teamwork gave the healing forest a tightknit place within the community.
 - Allowed for connections with more people in the community to be made.
 - Provides a place in the modern natural world that feels like "home" to Indigenous Peoples or where people can relax and enjoy nature that isn't home or work.
- Activity
 - People enjoy walking the pathway daily and love to sit within the garden.
 - People sit in the carved seating sacred circle and students visit on school walks.
- Reconciliation
 - Nature was harmed by colonization, therefore by healing forests, the forest will be restored to how it was meant to be.



Key Challenges

- Lack of Knowledge (City of Vancouver)
 - City of Vancouver was not well aware of stewardships programs.
 - There was uncertainty about what areas were allowed to be restored vs. what areas were not protected by city liability.
 - Specifically, who was responsible for the trail site.
 - Now that the city is on the same page as the organization, there is relief regarding the validity of the project.
- Lack of Knowledge (community)
 - People made complaints when they did not understand the purpose or operation of the project.
 - This was offset by having a planned statement for how to respond to complaints.
- Funding
 - FTF had a difficult time staying afloat during non-funded periods.
 - Operational funding is critical for stewardship organizers.



Key Challenges

- Urbanization
 - The healing garden is right next to subdivisions on either side of the garden.
 - A lot of what grows in the garden is spread from people's gardens in their adjacent yards.
 - People would plant invasive ivy on their fence, and Norway Maples in their backyard.
- Climate Change
 - Western red cedar, important species for Indigenous Peoples and are considered endangered.
 - Fallen cedar logs were found along the edge of the forest.
 - Cedars are not adaptable to warming temperatures, they require more water and less heat.
 - FTF is trying to offset these fallen logs through planting new cedar saplings.



Insights for Reconciliation

1. Creating spaces for reflection and knowledge-sharing can facilitate healing for Indigenous Peoples.

- Empowering local and on-campus Indigenous artists, knowledge holders, and leaders to create spaces and opportunities for reflection in the UW Healing Forest.
 - Benches, educational signage, art, writings.
 - Smudging events, Bannock and Jam events, native plant seminars, and more!

2. Restoration can be active reconciliation.

- Applying eco-cultural restoration by integrating reconciliation into UW Healing Forest restoration.
 - Hosting invasive removals and native plantings alongside Indigenous-led events.
 - Celebrating Days of Indigenous Significance.
 - Collaboration with Office of Indigenous Relations, Waterloo Indigenous Student Centre.



Insights for Community Engagement

3. The effectiveness of community-based restoration, specifically regarding invasive species control.

- Leveraging community (on- and off-campus) for Buckthorn removal.
 - Volunteers engaged through local initiatives (REEP, Sustainable Waterloo Region, Waterloo Region Nature, Volunteer Waterloo Region, local schools, and more!).
 - Students incentivized with certificates, through restoration classes or Diploma, or part-time paid opportunities.

4. Harnessing community action through engaging events and partnerships.

- Creating a more welcoming space for people to gather, and to learn and provide healing, and healing space
 - Art workshops and showings, educational events, and more.
 - Inviting local Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists, leaders, knowledge sharers.
 - Inclusivity for other groups (LGBTQ2S+, children, elders, and more!).



Free the Fern Stewardship Society presents

MAKING FRIENDS WITH FUNGI

Join DIY Mushroom Cultivation author, Willoughby Arévalo, on a walk, as we encounter and observe fungi with multiple senses. Willoughby will share basic principles of mushroom identification and point out some of the most ecologically impactful, edible, medicinal and toxic species. All ages welcome! Reserve your spot at www.freethefern.ca

DATE: SAT, NOV 16, 2024
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

LOCATION: DOUGLAS FIR TEACHING GARDEN
EAST OF 3530 SWASACRE,
VANCOUVER

Register at: www.freethefern.ca

Free the Fern Stewardship Society presents

BIODIVERSITY

a free nature event in honour of Indigenous History & Pride Month

SAT, 22 JUNE 2024
10:00 AM - 01:00 PM

DOUGLAS FIR TEACHING GARDEN
SOUTH VANCOUVER

- 10:00 AM Blessing - Tsawaysia Spukwus
- 10:15 AM Two-Spirit History Talk - Adrian Levesque
- 10:30 AM Bannock & Jam - Elder Marge Wylie
- 10:45 AM Nature Journaling - Joshua Ralph
- 11:15 AM Nature Walk - Vancouver Queer Birders
- 12:15 PM Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Lunch
- 01:00 PM Closing

This event is being held on the unceded and traditional territories of the x̱m̱ənḵ-w̱yám (Musqueam), Sq̱w̱w̱ə'w̱əsh (Squamish) and səllwətəč (Tsil'it-Wautuh) nations.

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QUNITY

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Insights for Restoration

5. Implementing biome-specific restoration by following natural processes and requirements.

- Usage of restoration efforts that directly correlate to the ecological requirements of the biome.
 - FTF found success through usage of mulch to increase moisture retention within the soil.
- Restore ecological functions.

6. Following environmental best management practices (eBMPs) recommended by region/municipality.

- Following the recommendations of organizations such as OIPC in addressing the spread of invasives.

7. Native species planting programs.

- Pollinator gardens.
- Creation of natural buffer zones.
- Climate resilient gardens.



Thank you!

Questions?