

## **Benefits of native plantings on Gordon grounds near the Yellow School House**

The new landscaping at Gordon has not included any replacement for the old “Butterfly Garden” of native shrubs and small trees. The Butterfly Garden was heavily used for outdoor teaching, by students for nature play, and by wildlife. New plantings with a similar theme could replace and enhance the benefits of the old Butterfly Garden.

### **Teaching opportunities with a native plant garden**

- Identification and knowledge of different kinds of native flowers, bushes and trees gives students insight into the natural British Columbia, and how the local area looked before Vancouver was built.
- Teaching students which native plants First Nations use for food, dyes and building materials is brought alive when those same plants can be touched, smelled and handled by students.
- While teaching about food webs and ecosystems, native plants demonstrate many connections between plants, birds, insects and other animals, many of which the students discover themselves through their play time among the plants. By enhancing the old Butterfly Garden’s native plant collection with additional areas of wetland and/or grassland, students can experience and learn about a range of ecosystems and the animal life they support.
- The variety of plant shapes, plant sizes, leaf shapes and petal numbers presented in a busy garden of bushes and flowers provide an excellent opportunity for collecting real data for developing math and graphing skills.

### **Hardy nature play area for students**

Students are naturally attracted to bushes and small plants, for creating their own private play spaces. These areas provide the creativity-inspiring complexity of the patterns made by branches, leaves and flowers, along with the calming colours of nature.

Native plants are easy to maintain and are often rugged enough to withstand the love of inquisitive children.

### **Native plants for wildlife**

Many species of wildlife, most notably birds, are attracted to and supported by native plants. In the old Butterfly Garden, bush tits safely fed on the insects hidden under leaves and on one occasion built a nest in the tall Oregon grape. Chickadees were frequently heard among the branches, and bees and butterflies were attracted to the Nootka rose, lupins and other flowers. Hummingbirds used the wild plum trees as a stopping off point on the way to the shelter and food of the Butterfly Garden, and finches feasted on the spring blossoms of the wild plums. These birds and insects will move in again if we provide them with a new Butterfly Garden.

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The native plants of the old Butterfly Garden included: dogwood tree, red twig dogwood bush, Nootka rose, Oregon grape, saskatoon, salal, flowering current (red and white), lupin, camas, violet. Native plants are adapted to our climate so need very little care once they are established.