



AUTUMN 2023 Newsletter

"There are thousands of ways to take action. For example, plant trees, pick up litter, join an organisation or movement that makes a difference and especially try to influence adults and put pressure on people in power."
- Greta Thunburg

Thank you to all our wonderful volunteers who have spent many hours this past year watering, weeding, and planting in Serenity Garden. They have created a beautiful place to walk, smell the roses, sit peacefully and even picnic. We also appreciate our volunteers who have helped out at our tree walks and at community events.



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT RIVERVIEW

Tree Walks

Large turnouts at our last two tree walks this fall show strong support from the community at large for saving the trees at səmiq ʷə?elə/ Riverview.

- Our September 17th tree walk led by Douglas Justice (Faculty of Science, UBC Botanical Garden) had over 200 supportive attendees. Here is the video link showing highlights:
<https://youtu.be/vWIZ-boIn2U?si=CeGxZpZatBF9yVvj>

During the walk, this broken tree branch caught the public's attention. Our tour leader commented that there's a lot of damage in the trees that could have been prevented. The RHCS believes that the trees require more maintenance from those responsible for their care.



- Our October 22nd tree walk led for the first time by Egan Davis (Parks Operations Manager for the City of Richmond) was another record-breaking turnout of over 300 enthusiastic attendees.

Thank you to all who attended the tree walks, became members of RHCS, and made donations!

RHCS is determined to do all we can to keep the tree walks free and to encourage the public to enjoy the beauty of this unique landscape

- We've applied for grants, we're accepting donations, and we are fundraising to pay for the exorbitant fees BC Housing is intent on charging for every tree walk in 2024.

RHCS is now paying to provide a porta-potty on site for the public as BC Housing refuses to repair/reopen the washroom in Serenity Garden.



Demolition Update

The latest building slated for demolition on the səmɪq̓ wəʔelə/ Riverview lands is the old fire hall. Built in 1924, it was manned over the years by a crew of up to 9 full-time employees and 20 volunteers complete with fire trucks.

In 1956 expansion of the fleet occurred when a 100-foot aerial ladder fire truck was acquired to enable the firefighters to reach up to the roof of any building at Essondale.



The facility closed in April 1988 at which time responsibility was transferred to the Coquitlam Fire and Rescue by the Provincial Government. Upon closure the fleet of two fire trucks, a 1982 Mack Pumper and a 1970 Ford Pumper, were relocated to Coquitlam Fire and Rescue, with the Ford being immediately auctioned off.

Here are a few photos of the firehall today surrounded by fencing.





TREE FEATURE

Tree profile: Norway Spruce, *Picea abies*

As the name suggests, you'll find this tree in Norway, with a native range that extends outwards to Central and Eastern Europe. This fast growing evergreen conifer is a towering, dark tree with elegant branches.

The dark green leaves are 4-sided needles with blunt tips, 1.2- 1.4 cm long. The needles are wonderfully fragrant. Young cones emerge red or purple in colour, but mature after pollination into brown-tan with pointed, overlapping scales. They are the longest of any spruce cone at 9-17 cm long and make an excellent identification feature.

At səmɪqˈwəʔelə/Riverview arboretum near the corner of Holly St. and Sorrel St., you'll find 2 specimens, each of them at least 20 ft tall. They have plenty of time yet to fill out and add height as mature trees are well over 100 ft.



Norway spruce in their native habitat

They are so widespread, it's likely you've probably walked past one in your local park or down the street in your neighbour's front yard. Worldwide, they are one of the most widely planted ornamental spruce trees; they are grown commercially as cut Christmas trees because of their classic and traditional form. In fact, Oslo, the capital of Norway, sends Norway spruces for London, Washington D.C., and Edinburgh to place in the city squares each Christmas. It's also a commonly used species outside of Rockefeller Center and has made countless appearances in iconic holiday movies and tv shows.



The largest of all spruce cones

Norway spruce is also edible in a variety of ways: the young spruce tips that emerge in spring make spruce beer, tea, or a delicious syrup when boiled down.

Check out this fantastic free resource:
[Buds, Branches and Bark: A Guide to Winter ID in the Pacific Northwest](#)



All decorated outside Rockefeller Center



NDP ELECTION PROMISES, PROMISES, PROMISES

TRI CITY NEWS APRIL 17TH 2017

Keep Riverview public, NDP's Horgan says

Coquitlam press conference lays out party's plans for mental health and addiction services.

BC NDP leader John Horgan **promised to keep the 244-acre Riverview lands in public hands** just days after a Coquitlam Riverview advocacy group expressed frustration with red tape and fees for holding public tree tours. **"Our plan is to use the Riverview lands as they were intended, public lands to provide public wellness for the people in this province,"** he said. Horgan told the small crowd of media and Riverview supporters that the NDP would follow through with the BC Liberal government's \$75 million replacement for the Maples Adolescent and Youth Treatment Centre, and the \$101 million-105 bed mental-health facility to replace the Burnaby Centre for Mental Health and Addictions.

The NDP's promise of protection for public lands comes as the Riverview Horticultural Centre Society worries about new requirements to fill out paperwork and pay \$50 an hour fees for a "location fixer" to hold monthly public walks and Treefest at Riverview.

Some RHCS members were on hand for the announcement and Elaine Golds, of the Burke Mountain Naturalists, said Horgan's announcement gave her "hope" that the heritage trees would be saved and the property kept for mental health purposes.

"It was like music to my ears," Golds said, however, she agreed that she would like to see more details about the announcement.

Selina Robinson, the incumbent MLA who is running against BC Liberal candidate Steve Kim and BC Green Party candidate Nicola Spurling, said fleshing out the details was "the work of government." But she **said Horgan's Riverview announcement was a commitment to keep "public lands for public benefit" and that the site would be ideal for a centre of excellence for mental health because it is close to four regional hospitals.**

TRI CITY NEWS NOV 17TH 2017

Horgan was in Coquitlam along with Coquitlam-Maillardville MLA Selina Robinson, the minister of municipal affairs and housing, and Judy Darcy, minister of mental health and addictions, to assist at a groundbreaking for the 105-bed facility that will replace a 60- year old building in Burnaby.

Robinson and Horgan also re-confirmed their election commitment to keep Riverview in the public domain as a facility for health and wellness, including protection of the arboretum.

COALITION FOR A HEALTHY RIVERVIEW RALLY 2017

Here's a bit of more recent history in the fight to protect the səmiq wəʔelə/Riverview Lands.

It's a video of the Coalition for a Healthy Riverview Rally that we held just prior to NDP coming into power. The Liberal Government was very close to selling off the Lands. Some of the speakers of interest: **Richard Stewart, Fin Donnelly, Mike Farnworth, Selina Robinson, Elaine Golds** amongst others. Rick Glumac and Amy Lubik played guitar and sang after the Rally. We had over 300 people come out on very short notice, along with loads of media coverage. Here's the link to the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oavOieh6WJ8>



RHCS NOVEMBER 2023

Our politicians need to be accountable and true to their word.

Please continue the campaign to let your local MLAs, the Premier, the BC Housing Minister, and Coquitlam City Councillors know that you want to see the səmiq wəʔelə/ Riverview arboretum protected, as well as have the RHCS Tree Walks continue without prohibitive fees!

- The premier David.eby.mla@leg.bc.ca
- BC Housing Minister ravi.khalon.mla@leg.bc.ca
- Fin Donnelly fin.donnelly.mla@leg.bc.ca
- Selina Robinson Selina.robinson.mla@leg.bc.ca

Keep checking our Facebook, Instagram, and Website (rhcs.org) for updates!



People are like trees

By Allison Luke



Western redcedar in Avatar Grove, BC



European beech seedlings

This summer at my workplace we engaged in an icebreaker at the beginning of a meeting. With an influx of seasonal staff, a full third of the room was full of faces I'd never met before, so an icebreaker was a natural way for the incoming and full-time staff to get to know each other. We divvied up into small groups and our task for the next 10 minutes was to find 10 things we all had in common. It was an interesting process; difficult at first and then very quickly the list of random things started adding up. We all have a sibling. We are all right handed. We all like mangoes. There was lots of laughter and more than a few surprises, but the end takeaway is that each group member came away feeling more connected than 10 minutes before. Of course: that was the point of the exercise.

It was not long after this exercise that I casually began to make a list of things people and trees had in common. Could I come up with 10? We both are susceptible to viruses, bacteria, and fungi. We both use carbohydrates as an energy source. We both have better outcomes in connected, social communities. I was astounded by how much we shared in common and I wished to explore these topics more. Each newsletter, we will explore one way in which people are like trees. The hope in sharing, of course, is that we can all come away from feeling more connected to trees than before.

People are like trees: we both age and change over time. How are we alike and how do we differ? If we take a closer look at how old trees live to be and compare that with the average human life span, the age is at least in part dependent on the particular species. For instance, mountain ashes (*Sorbus* spp.) are notoriously short lived boreal trees as are many fruit bearing species. Cherries and apricots have a life expectancy of a few decades and can go as low as between 10-25 years old for peaches (Barth, 2018).

Of course, the numbers only go up from there and many species like olives (*Olea europaea*) and oaks (*Quercus* spp.) live to be hundreds of years old. Under the ideal environmental conditions, some species even crack the thousand years mark, such as some of our last remaining old growth Western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*) and giant sequoias (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) farther down south along the coast (Pawson, 2023). As for the distinction of the oldest single tree in the world, those honours go to a bristlecone pine (*Pinus longaeva*) named Methuselah who has celebrated 4600 birthdays on earth (Ofgang, 2023).

How do humans compare? Globally, the life expectancy in 2019 was 73.4 years old (World Health Organization, 2019). Older than a peach tree and much younger than a bristlecone pine, there are many species that share similar life expectancies of us as humans, one example being the red alder (*Alnus rubra*), a native tree of the Pacific Northwest. While I like having this in common, I find it rather comforting that trees for the most part can outlive us. Their permanence gives history and context to a specific place and their silent steadfastness contravenes a modern world that changes so rapidly.

It's interesting to note that the most dire statistics across the board for all species are for those planted in urban cores and outlying suburban centers. Multiple studies using data across the globe have shown a range between 7 and 28 years is the average lifespan an urban tree is expected to survive (Limogoes, Pham, and Apparicio, 2019). Green infrastructure provides immense benefits to our cities and it's essential that we make improvements to increase both the longevity and vitality of urban trees.



On that note, we know too well it's not just the tallied years, but all the changes we go through in our bodies. Consider our human journey that starts as a single fertilized cell, to a newborn with all of its complex organs and systems formed within those 9 months, to a walking, talking child a handful of years later. As we march on until adulthood, the changes never end: our voices deepen, we make memories, gain weight, cut our hair, break bones, fall ill, and sometimes we get better and sometimes we are changed permanently.

Trees also begin tiny, fragile, their first embryonic leaves called cotyledons bursting out of the seed into the soil reaching towards the light of the sun. When you are in the presence of a very ancient tree, it's hard to believe they were once that small. They go through a myriad of changes as a young sapling putting all its energy into growth. Depending on the species, they will need a number of years before they are ready to reproduce and as mature adults and beyond, they support greater and more complex levels of biodiversity as birds, wildlife, insects, and other fauna use their branches, trunk, and roots as habitat.

One example of the many changes trees go through is the way in which the whimsical monkey puzzle tree (*Araucaria araucana*) changes its shape or form. In youth, they are pyramidal in shape and then begin to shed their lower limbs as they age and begin to form a more rounded crown. On the Andes Mountains, their native habitat, the oldest trees look like giant umbrellas emerging out of the hillsides.

Another example is many young trees begin with smooth bark which ages into thicker, more distinctive bark. Lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*) has smooth and grey bark when juvenile and over time, it gets scaly, forming into vertical fissures bringing out orange and brown hues. Some species have bark that peels in white papery strips (and were used for paper!) while others form camouflage coloured plates of tan, grey, and pale yellow that exfoliate, revealing sea green inner bark.

Bark is helpful clue for identifying trees, but I think just as important, it's the sheer enjoyment of celebrating each tree's unique character. We all know too well that our skin changes too over time: we get wrinkles (hopefully those furrows are from smiling too much), sun spots, and scars. Perhaps if we reframed our human aging process as a celebration of our unique character—a visual storytelling of our lives—we would happier for it.



Young monkey puzzle tree-pyramidal form



Older monkey puzzle tree-rounded form

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Trees, Nature, and our Mental Health...

'Have you ever noticed how spending time in nature instantly calms the mind and lifts your spirits? Well, that's because nature has a way of working its magic on us. Engaging in plant care and gardening offers a therapeutic experience that can significantly improve your mood and mental health. There is plenty of research available that shows nurturing plants and spending time in nature reduces stress, anxiety, and depression, while also increasing feeling of happiness and overall life satisfaction.

One of the beautiful aspects of gardening is that it aligns with the concept of 'what you focus on expands'. As you pour your energy and attention into nurturing your plants, you not only witness their growth but also cultivate positive mindset within yourself. The act of caring for something living reminds you of the interconnectedness of all life and the importance of nurturing yourself along the way.

Each interaction becomes an opportunity to connect with nature and yourself, grounding yourself in the present moment and fostering a deep sense of peace. Cultivate mindfulness through the act of caring, and watch as the world of plants (and trees) becomes a gateway, to inner peace and well-being.'

'The Mindful Movement' newsletter- Quote from June 2023

MEMBERSHIP

Our membership has grown to 391.

Each membership gives us a stronger voice and a greater presence in our community that cannot be ignored.

Membership renewals come due in April of 2024

Membership forms are available on our website rhcs.org

"Any fool can destroy trees. They cannot run away; and if they could, they would still be destroyed - chased and hunted down as long as fun or a dollar could be got out of their bark hides, branching horns, or magnificent bole backbones."

- John Muir



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Instagram link:

https://www.instagram.com/riverview_society/?igshid=MjEwN2lyYWYwYw%3D%3D

MEMBER FEEDBACK

Send us your thoughts and suggestions to
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