

Vegetation Associations in North Saanich



North Saanich lies in the Coastal Douglas fir Moist Maritime (CDFmm) Zone, a zone with many endangered plant species and the greatest biodiversity in BC. A large number of the former Garry oak meadows in North Saanich have been subsumed by development or agriculture, and most old growth forests have been replaced. However, uncommon or endangered species can still be found within the municipality. Most parks where FNSP has a presence have been mapped for their vegetation associations. Since the vegetation associations have greater biomass than single plants, they may be easier to identify. In the photo above, Douglas fir has furrowed bark at maturity which is one of its characteristics.



Douglas fir needles grow completely around the branch

Douglas fir–Dull Oregon Grape Association

This endangered association occurs under moderate moisture regimes and at upper to lower slopes. Examples can be found in Horth Hill, Quatsino, RO Bull, and Sumac Parks. It is also found on some trails such as the one from Clayton Road to Tatlow Drive.



Left: The Douglas fir–Dull Oregon Grape Association. Right: Oregon Grape detail

Douglas fir–Arbutus–Shore Pine Association

It is uncommon to find shore pine in North Saanich although a few occur in John Dean Park. In North Saanich, the association is usually called Douglas fir–Arbutus, and it is found on rocky or drier sites. Examples occur at shoreline locations like Nymph Point, or Deep Cove, substantially in John Dean Park on western locations such as the Alec Road trail, and in portions of Horth Hill Park.



Mature Arbutus trees

Douglas fir-Swordfern Association.



The Douglas fir-Swordfern association is found extensively in Sumac Park. The park is a nutrient- and moisture-rich site where Douglas fir has excellent growth.

Alder-Cottonwood-Slough Sedge Association

This endangered association appears in Lillian Hoffar Park, Prentice Pond Park and in portions of Green Park North and Reay Creek Park. It is a wet site type that often has standing water during the winter and early spring.



Alder-Cottonwood-Slough Sedge vegetation

Douglas fir-Salal Association



This commonly occurring association has moderate moisture and nutrient regimes. A photo of salal detail appears above. The forest in Denham Till Park, for example, is uniformly covered with salal.

Common Plant Species



Left: Oceanspray-with Douglas fir. This combination is an indicator of dry conditions—photo taken in Gulf View Park. Oceanspray is also found in Sycamore Park. Right: Snowberry- very hardy and widespread



Left: Nootka Rose. Right: Cascara. The rose is found in Lillian Hoffar as well as the driveway of Denham Till, and both species are found at Nymph Point Park.



June Plum found in Denham Till, Lillian Hoffar, Reay Creek, and Gulf View Parks as well as others



Trillium, a sensitive spring flower, found in Denham Till and Lillian Hoffar among others. Some North Saanich parks may be too disturbed to have many of these beautiful plants.

Uncommon Species



Canadian Yew - it is found in RO Bull Park along Wain road



Juniper is found in RO Bull Park in the meadow and Nymph Point Park at the point itself



Shore Pine



Left: Gairdner's yampah. Right: Small-flowered nemophila. Both plants are found in RO Bull Park's Garry Oak meadow.



Nodding onion - a few were found at Nymph Point Park at the point in 2021 but have not been seen for several years in the park.



Few-flowered Shooting Star. It has been found in Gulf View and Quarry Park meadows.

Selected Rare and/or Endangered Species (Red Listed) for the CDFmm



Red Alder/Skunk Cabbage Association. A small amount has been found in Prentice Pond Park.



Rigid Apple Moss



Contorted pod evening primrose - believed to be in Central Saanich



Phantom Orchid - said to be in Horth Hill Park. Spotted in one a North Saanich park.



Inventoried by Harry Williams in April 2021, our endangered park meadows contain many wildflowers. These meadows exist at Gulf View (left), Quarry (right), and RO Bull parks with a tiny section at Nymph Point. Some of the flowers have been described above.