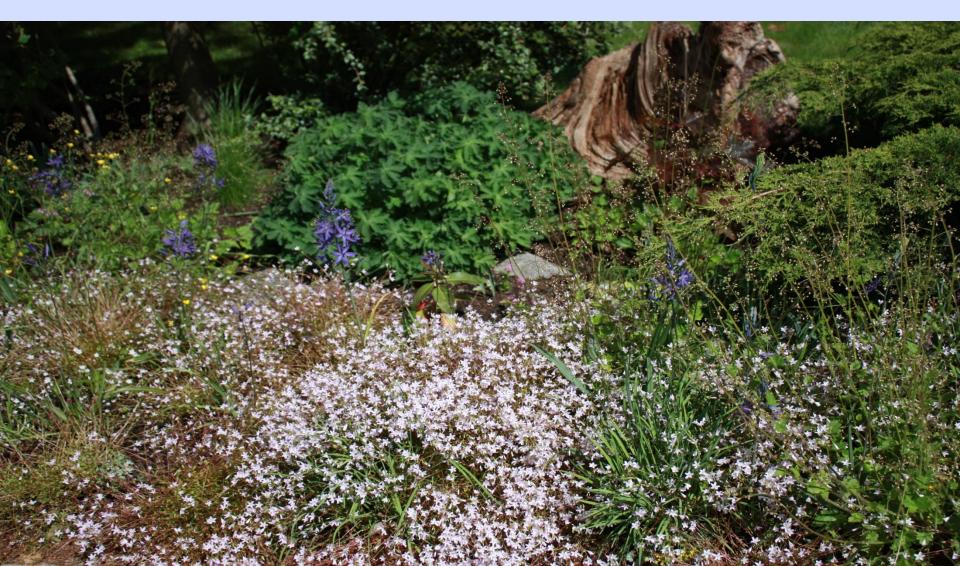
FROM BLAH TO WOW IN 18 MONTHS" CREATING A NATIVE PLANT GARDEN

Louise Goulet, Ph.D. R.P.Bio #168 April 2012



My Objectives

- To create a native garden to help salvage Garry Oak and woodland plant diversity at risk
- To create a native garden that is beautiful year-round and can be used as an educational tool with neighbours and friends, local government staff, and other people interested in native plants
- To learn about native plants in my surrounding environment and to help other groups trying to protect these plants [Giving presentations, seeds, plants, etc.]

How this was done over 18 months

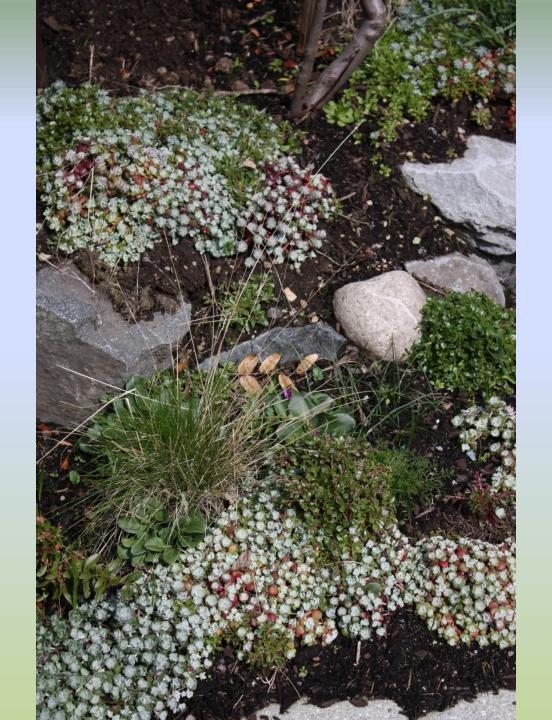
- Nov 2007 Started salvaging and stockpiling native plants
- June 08 Nov 08 Landscaped several habitat types over
 ~ 1700 sq feet on front/side of our property
- Summer 2008 Created a list of native plant species appropriate to each habitat type with the help of others
- Sept 08 Oct 08 Complemented salvaged species with plant trades and purchases (less than \$1,000 so far)
- Nov 08 Feb 09 Planted species in most suitable habitat
- April 09 First blooming

Salvaging Native Plants

- Participate in Saanich and Native Plant Study Group salvaging programs; also have other access to some private lands.
- Mostly salvaged though winter 2007-2008 on SE facing slopes in Metchosin, and again in summer 2010; in woodlands during summers 2009, 2010 and 2012.
 Work in progress - Main garden is South facing!
- Salvage pieces of sod up to 6" thick when possible, loose soil, carpets of mosses and/or licorice ferns, bulbs found below these; few shrubs/trees; nursing log





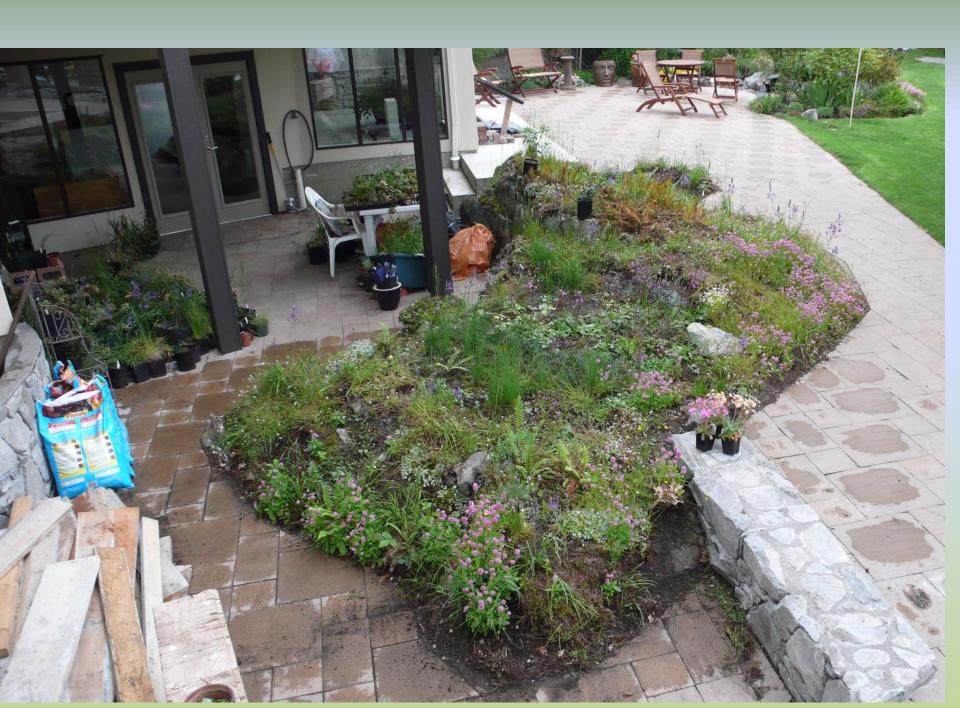






Stockpiling Salvaged Plants

- Pieces of sod salvaged during the winter, with embedded small bulbs, were weeded and stockpiled on exposed bedrock in backyard; large bulbs and few salvaged shrubs/trees were kept in large pots
- "Winter" sod was under laid with landscaping cloth and 2"-3" of sterilized soil; waited till plants bloomed to identify all species and plant in suitable habitat type
- Plant assemblages salvaged during the summer were identified and categorized as to habitat type; weeds were removed; sod and individual bulbs/larger plants were planted immediately in suitable habitats



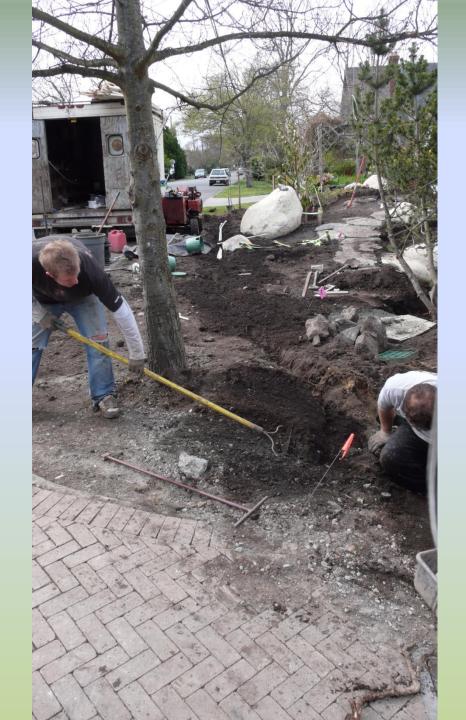


Landscaping and Site Preparation

- Going from flat, grassy or paved yard to varied habitats landscape architect developed a plan based on "wish" list
- Creating various aspects (S, N slopes), light regimes (sunny, shady, partly shady), moisture gradients (very dry to wet) and soil types (sandy, very sandy, or not sandy)
- Habitat types created included woodland, Garry oak meadow, steep S/N facing slopes, rocky outcrops, shady areas (behind large rocks or trees), stream and pond
- Sand mixed in Garry meadow soil, with 6"of sand also placed under top foot of that soil to ensure very good drainage. Rich garden soil was not modified for other habitat types, other than adding as much salvaged soil as possible when planting







Identifying Salvaged Plants and Other Desirable Plants

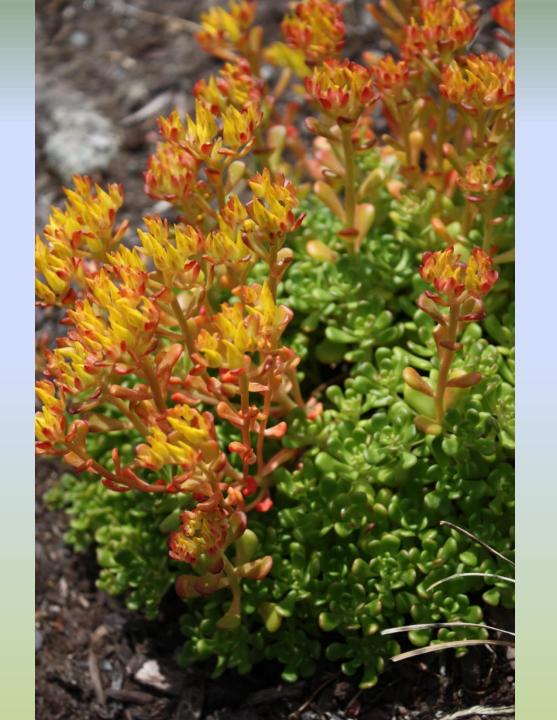
- I identified what I could (*Plants of Coastal BC* by Pojar and Mackinnon), and hired a plant ecologist to identify the plants I did not know
- With the help of the plant ecologist, I categorized areas in the front and side gardens in 11 specific habitat types
- The plant ecologist listed the plant species typical of each habitat type, to be secured if possible to get a rough representation of plant diversity found in the wild
- Yellow flag for unknown species during open garden sessions, to have these plants identified by visitors

Buying/Trading for Selected Species

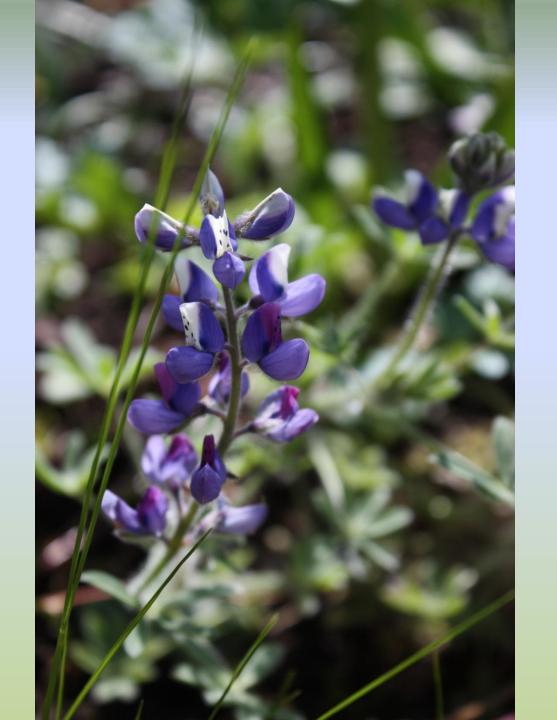
- Primary selection was based on the list of species identified as typical of the habitats available, plus personal wish list
- Buying most shrubs and small trees these do not transplant well from the wild [Oregon Grape, Vine Maple, Gummy Currant]
- Buying showy/focal species [Red Columbine, Bearberry, Common Harebell, Pacific Rhododendron, Scouler's Corydalis] to add interest and lengthen flowering season
- Trading for species not available commercially, such as native grasses (~10 species) or Two-coloured lupine
- In total, ~200 species (List available on request)







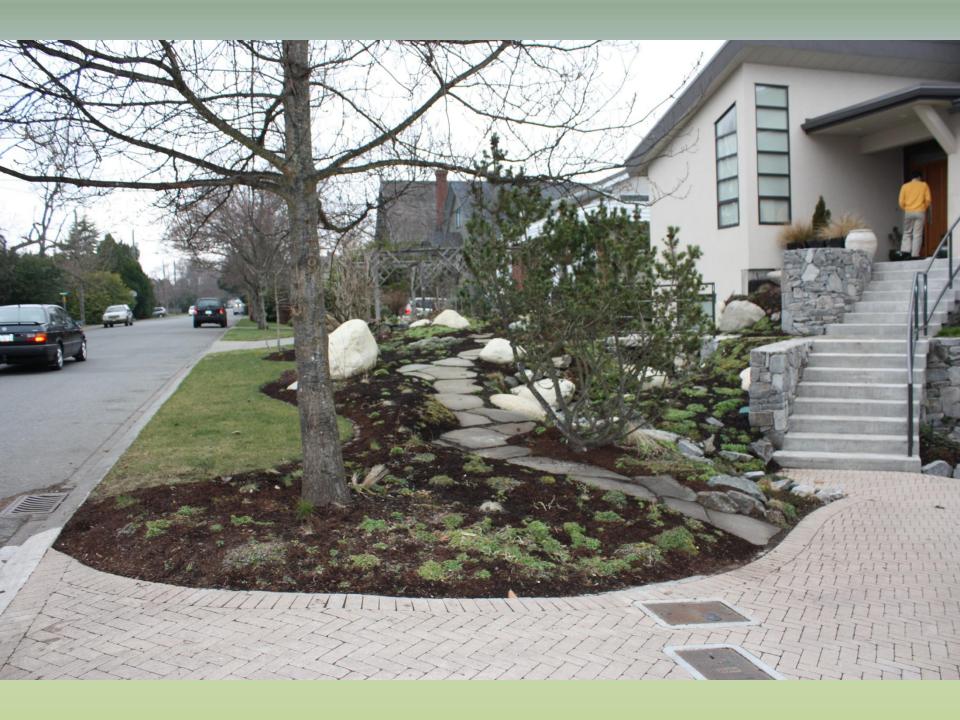






Febr 2009 Planting and Mulching

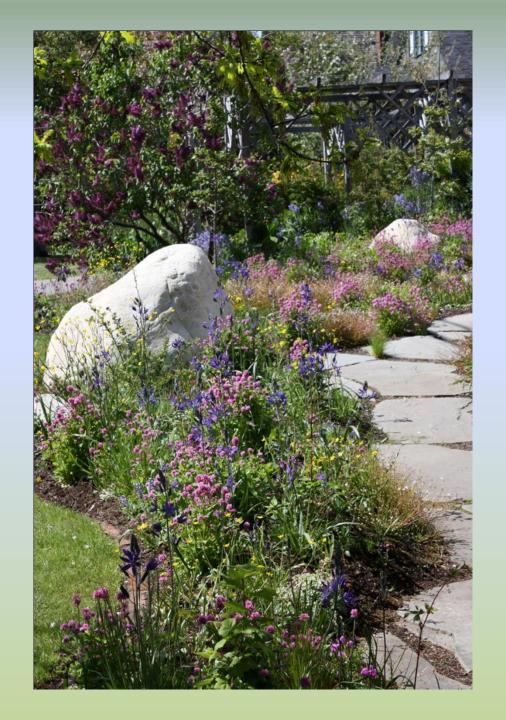
- Few ornamental/native trees were kept and, with large rocks, were used to provide shade, e.g. English Oak, Red-osier dogwood
- Bulbs not imbedded in salvaged sod were planted first, at different depth for each species [Garry Oak Gardeners' Handbook)
- Areas with planted bulbs were covered with dark mulch to avoid damage when planting sod or potted plants nearby
- All weeds were removed from potted plants and pieces of sod, which were "planted" at soil level, besides bulb patches
- Individual plants and "islands of sod" were connected by a "sea of mulch" for looks, to ensure consistent moisture levels and to keep off weeds

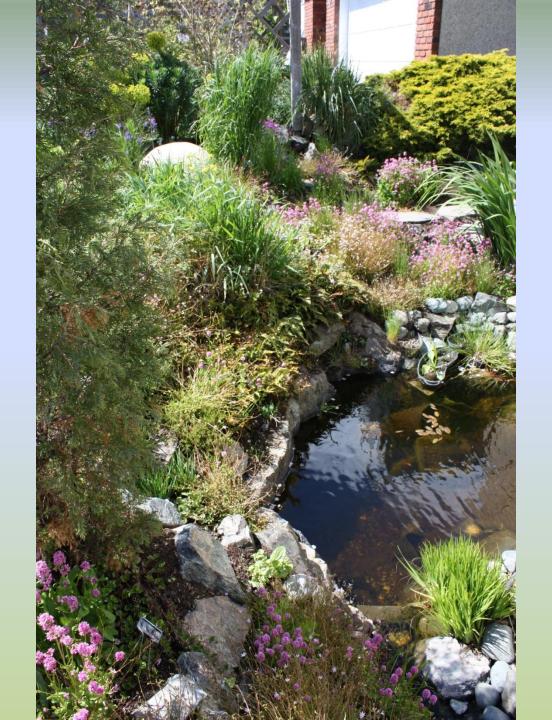




First Blooming May 2009













Challenges

- Identifying native plants and their habitat requirements
- Knowing weeds and staying on top of them!!!
- Cost and availability of commercially-sold native plants
- Access to plants to be salvaged or to be traded
- Time and physical strength required to do the work
- Control of aggressive or prolific species such as yarrow and seablush, which take off in "empty" rich soil
- Watering keep moist for first two years but no water in August for bulbs to harden; different habitat needs
- Making garden "beautiful" year-round, including lengthening blooming period for public appeal
- Propagation of wanted species need information, supplies, place to do it, time and luck
- Maintenance (weed, weed, then weed again); keep adding

Watering

- From April to June, the garden was watered twice a week for 15 to 20 minutes each time, via a sprinkling system, if it had not rained
- In July, the garden was watered once a week for 20 to 30 minutes
- During August and September, watering was minimized to ~ 10 minutes a week but the top 4 inches of soil was not allowed to dry out completely. After that, the garden was no longer watered

Plant Propagation

- Seeds of late blooming flowers and of native grasses were collected during the summer months (~25 species). Most of these seeds were given away or traded for other plants or seeds
- Some seeds were also kept to propagate and add to the garden if successfully grown
- For each plant species, half of the seeds were planted outside under plastic cover. The other half were planted in January 2010 and kept inside at about 17 degree Celsius
- So far, about 25 species have germinated, planting not always successful

Pros and Cons of the Sod Approach

Pros

- Very few plants are lost as they come with their own soil and their roots are largely intact
- Brings in microscopic flora and fauna found in soil
- Brings in native plant species you did not even know where there!

Cons

- Also brings weeds!
- Requires strength to salvage, stockpile and replant pounds and pounds of sod!





Other Benefits

- Contributes to conservation of native plants in B.C.
- Contributes to educating the public with open gardens and presentations
- Meeting new people, making new friends
- Learning, learning, learning!
- Keeps you in shape (if it does not kill you first)
- Sense of accomplishment, joy and wonder

Other ways to help

- Join Garry oak Ecosystems Recovery Team [GOERT], Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society, or Victoria Natural History Society – learn and keep yourself informed
- Participate in restoration projects several groups such as Saanich municipality, Friends of Uplands Parks, Government House or Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary are always looking for volunteers to help
- **Participate in salvaging programs** grow your own plants andr contribute these to established restoration programs invasive plants need to be replaced by native plants
- Support the protection of Garry oak ecosystems by encouraging municipalities and non-profit groups such as Nature Conservancy of Canada or Habitat Acquisition Trust to purchase /protect Garry oak areas
- Write letters to politicians or government agencies asking them to protect species at risk and the areas where these are found

Thanks

- To my husband and son for their help to salvage sod and plants
- To Pat Johnson and Hans Roemer for helping me get started
- To GOERT for providing so much information
- To Fred Hook (City of Victoria), Rob Hagel (Pacific Forestry Centre) and June Pretzer (Swan Lake) for trading seeds, plants and tips

Questions

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