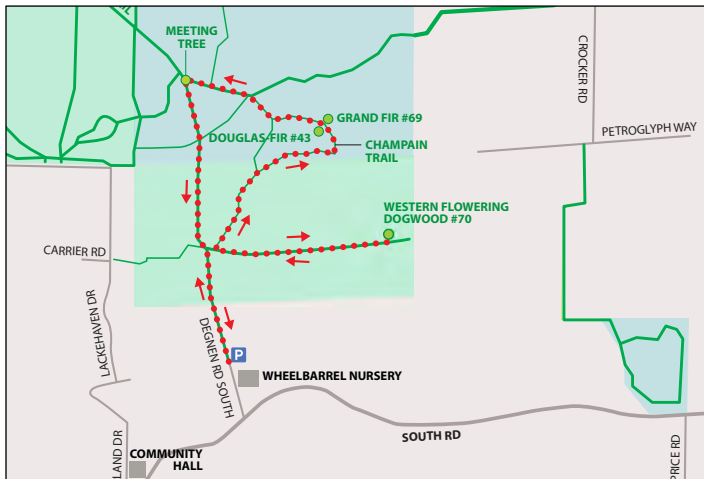


# Walk #7

## Champain Trail



Trailheads are marked with painted rocks (thanks to Gabriola's Grade 6/7 class!) and routes are marked with **green flagging tape**. Both will be removed in late March.

### What To Expect

*Approx Time:* 1 hour

*Approx Distance:* 4.5 km

*Difficulty:* Easy with some surface roots

*Begin:* End of Degnen Road South—(limited parking approx 50m past Wheelbarrow Nursery)

This lovely walk offers travels through both mixed new growth and more mature mixed-wood forests.

## Trail Route and Tree Nominees



Western flowering dogwood

After leaving the parking area to your right, follow the trail to the first intersection (where there is a triangular 'yield' sign on a tree) and turn right. Stay on the main trail through mixed new growth forest, including invasive scotch broom, for about seven minutes and down on your left in a small clearing is a large forked western flowering dogwood (BTR #70), the official flower emblem of British Columbia. Preparations of the bark are said to have medicinal properties and, although the wood is in demand, it is unlawful to harvest it. It is definitely worth a revisit in springtime when it is in bloom.

Retrace your steps and take the first right trail (not quite back to the first intersection) and then the next right onto Champain Trail. Once a disused logging road—in the early 2000s—Teri Champain, who was a local resident and member of the horse community, got her chainsaw out and cleared the trail so horses could travel along it. Champain Trail has an abundance of beautiful large specimens of bigleaf maple, western red cedar, grand fir and Douglas-fir and is carpeted with majestic sword ferns. Rich in calcium and moisture, the bark



## Winter Walkabout 2022: Trees





Douglas-fir #43

of bigleaf maples encourages the growth of epiphytic (plants that grow on other plants) mosses, ferns and liverworts.

Proceed along the trail and after about six minutes on your left will be an enormous Douglas-fir (BTR #43). Douglas-fir is named after David Douglas, an explorer and collector for the Royal Horticultural Society in the 1800's. Just before the fir, if you look into the woods to your right there are several grand firs, the furthest one of this cluster is the BTR #69. Also named by David Douglas due to the great height it can attain, the bark of the grand fir is ridged, grey and smoother than the bark of the Douglas-fir. Fir bark, wood and boughs have many practical and medicinal uses to Indigenous peoples.



Grand fir #69

Continue along the trail and turn right at the next junction and left at the following junction onto the main trail and a fine big Douglas-fir. The 'Meeting Tree', our local name and (nominated by both **Anne Landry** and **Kerry Marcus**), held a special place in the lives of the early settlers on Gabriola Island. Located at the junction of the Old Centre Road Trail and the trail once known as Pit Trail, children would pass by daily on their way to the school house near South Road. A telegraph line with glass insulators on wooden posts attached to trees had originally run some length along old Centre Road, however, only one wooden post remains visible today, high up on the side of the Meeting Tree facing Pit Trail.

From this memorable tree, now turn left and follow this trail back to the starting point.



The Meeting Tree

*This route is on lands held for Snuneymuxw First Nation. Information on indigenous uses of plants can be found in books such as Pojar and Mackinnon's field guide Plants of Coastal British Columbia, or Luschiim's Plants: Traditional Indigenous Foods, Materials and Medicine by Dr. Luschiim Arvid Charlie and Nancy Turner.*

*Many thanks to Kerry Marcus and Nick Doe for providing historical information.*