# Walk #4
Trees and Benches

What To Expect

Approx Time: 1.5 hours • *Approx Distance*: 6 km

Difficulty: moderate (These trails are relatively foot-friendly with some roots and rocks on the trail surface as well as soggy, muddy, or wet sections after rainfalls. The trail down from the viewpoint is moderately steep with potentially slippery sections.)

Begin: at the end of Jeanette Avenue - post 16

This walk offers clear day views of Vancouver Island and travels through mixed-wood forest in which are situated three benches beautifully crafted by volunteer Jamie Doig, with maple wood donated by Charlotte and Tom Cameron, and installed by GaLTT work crews.
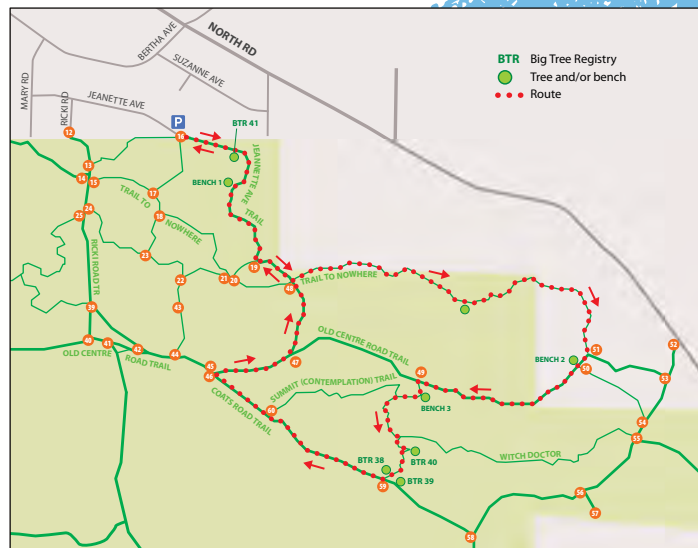
Trailheads are marked with painted rocks (thanks to Gabriola's Grade 6/7 class!) and routes are marked with green flagging tape. Both will be removed in late March.

Trail Route and Tree Nominees

At the end of Jeanette, keep to the left trail. After a short walk through mixed forest and many beautiful, gnarly maples, look to your right for a bitter cherry tree (Big Tree Registry #41) with four large trunks growing from a base with circumference of 2.23 metres. The leaves are oval-shaped and pinkish flowers bear bright red cherries, but the fruit is rarely eaten due to its bitter taste. The reddish-brown bark is tough and waterproof and is peeled in strips for making baskets and mats.

Sally Bullas: bigleaf maple

Further down the trail is a large bigleaf maple (nominated by **Sally Bullas**) with a GaLTT bench happily installed beneath its spreading branches. Bigleaf maple wood is ideal for making paddles and is sometimes called the "paddle tree" by Indigenous peoples.*

Bitter cherry

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Continue on the trail, keeping to the left at post 19, and turn left again at post 48 onto Trail to Nowhere. On the right after approximately eight minutes, you'll come across a beautiful bigleaf maple (nominated by **Suzanne Christopher** and **Sandi Winter**) with mighty aboveground, moss-covered roots. Rich in calcium and moisture, the bark of bigleaf maples encourages the growth of epiphytic (plants that grow on other plants) mosses, ferns and liverworts. Look carefully and you'll notice two tiny elves' homes nestled in the bark.


Suzanne Christopher + Sandi Winter: bigleaf maple

Proceed along this often sun-dappled trail to post 51 and turn right to post 50, where another beautifully crafted bench is located.

Post 50

At post 50, travel up Old Centre Road Trail and then turn left at post 49 taking the trail to our third bench at The Viewpoint,

The Lookout

known to many as Contemplation Hill. Positioned to capture the view, mountains of Vancouver Island are visible on a clear day.

From The Viewpoint, follow the trail to the right and then left down the steep hill trail of Foxglove Downs. Keep right where the trail forks at the bottom and you'll see a designated Wildlife Tree, a large Douglas-fir (BTR #40) on your left. Wildlife Trees are managed by the BC Ministry
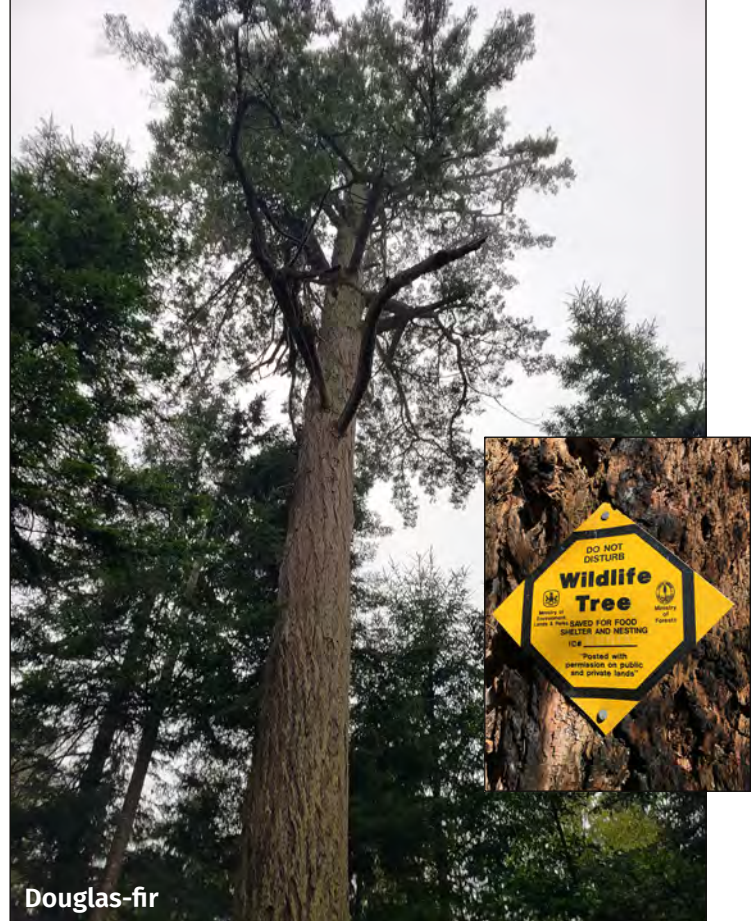
Douglas-fir

of the Environment to maintain and enhance habitat for the species that depend on them (about 15 percent of the province's birds, mammals and amphibians). A keyhole path, just off the trail, offers a better view of the tree, with a large—perhaps owl nesting—hole and its broken top, visible.

Continue on Witch Doctor Trail to post 59 at Coats Drive Trail. Honourable mention goes to a Scouler's willow (BTR #39) on the left that unfortunately blew down in the storms of late November. Look to the meadow on the right, however, and you'll see a large healthy specimen (BTR #38) with erect woody branches. Similar to

Scouler's willow

most willows, the bark contains pain relief and anti-inflammatory properties from which aspirin was originally derived. A tea made from the leaves offers a less bitter but weaker alternative to the bark tea. Fast growing willows provide valuable overhead protection to slower growing tree species.

To return to Jeanette Avenue turn right on Coats Drive Trail to post 46 and turn right. At post 47 turn left, head past post 48 to post 19, and turn right onto Jeanette Avenue Trail to the starting point.