



# Nature Stewards

## Seven Frequently Asked Questions

### 1) What is the Nature Stewards Program?

GaLTT's Nature Stewards program is a decade long challenge for all of us to voluntarily conserve at least 30% of our properties in a natural/nature-friendly state to support biodiversity.

### 2) Is this run or controlled by government?

**No.** While GaLTT (a registered nonprofit charity) has asked for and periodically receives small grant funding and in-kind support from levels of government, Nature Stewards is a community-run volunteer program participated in by your friends and neighbours.

### 3) Why is the program needed?

- Just slightly more than 12 % of Gabriola is officially protected in parks and other reserves. Two-thirds of our island is private land, and we are densely populated for a Gulf Island. Nature is under stress here (and worldwide) because of human presence and activities.
- All our actions in caring for nature and doing more to conserve biodiversity on our properties are vital for the island's ecological health.

### 4) How does the program work?

- Contact GaLTT using an online reply form on the Nature Stewards webpage.
- Trained volunteers will do a walkabout with you on your property, ID features, ask about your goals for enhancing or conserving nature, and make suggestions for how you can make improvements that support biodiversity.
- The volunteers will look at the features of your property that support biodiversity including:
  - How much native habitat is there?
  - Have you done or do you want to do any enhancements for nature? (e.g. add native plants, bird/bat boxes, softer edges, pollinator gardens)
  - Are invasive plants like Scotch broom or daphne being controlled?

- After the visit we'll send you a brief report. If it looks like your property meets the goal of conserving 30% or more in native (or modified wildlife-friendly) habitat, you will be invited to make a voluntary conservation pledge and receive a Nature Stewards sign for your fence or gate.

## 5) If I make a Nature Stewards' conservation pledge, does it mean I have to stay off natural areas of my property and can't do anything to it?

- **Absolutely not!** This is a pledge, not a legal document. You are just promising to do your best to support biodiversity and create habitat for native species.
- Our program is all about stewardship, which means caring for how you live as a part of nature, so that *all* life can thrive. It is about the long-view versus short-term thinking.
- Indigenous culture teaches that we share the landscape with all the beings that live in a place, from the biggest trees to the tiniest unseen organisms in the soil, and that we must respect the needs of those we share with. Nature Stewards encourages people to think about stewarding their land in this way—it is not that trees can never be cut down nor a cabin built nor native berries harvested, but we should recognize that doing so impacts other species and take that into consideration. We receive the benefits of nature as gifts: how can we give back and support nature on our property and in our community?

## 6) How long do landholders commit to conserving native habitat on their property?

- Most landholder pledges are for 5 or 10 years, a few are 50 or more—it's your choice!—and all can easily be renewed or cancelled at any time.
- Participation is totally voluntary, and on the honour system. It is not a legal agreement, and the pledge is not carried on the property title. You can end it or extend it at any time.
- We hope you will always be a good steward, and if you sell your property, we ask that you contact GaLTT and you encourage the new owners continue being a good Nature Steward.

## 7) How does someone sign up for a site visit?

Please fill out the reply form at the bottom of GaLTT's Nature Stewards page:

<https://galtt.ca/naturestewards/>