

## Winter Plant Walk

With Julia Alards-Tomalin

Saturday, February 24, 2024

2-4pm

Summary notes as taken by [Grace Nombardo](#), Communication Coordinator with the Invasive Species Council of Metro Vancouver (ISCMV)

This walk was organized as part of the [Stewardship Series](#) in partnership between [ISCMV](#) & [Stanley Park Ecology Society \(SPES\)](#).

[Julia Alards-Tomalin](#) is an instructor at the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT), in Burnaby, Canada. She studied Forestry and Ecological Restoration at BCIT and recently completed a Master of Education at Simon Fraser University. Her background is diverse, including horticulture, arboriculture, invasive species management and ecological restoration, but is united by a common theme of plants. In 2022 she was awarded the Teaching Excellence in Open Education Employee Excellence Award at BCIT and in 2023 was awarded an Open Education Award for Excellence in the Open Pedagogy category from OE Global. You can view her book, [Buds, Branches, & Bark](#) (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), online for free.

## Introduction at the Nature House

Walk participants met at the Nature House in Stanley Park.

Julia introduced her background and provided an introduction to

**Parts of a Branch** (see separate handout):

- **Node:** where leaf and buds grow
- **Internode:** area between two nodes on a branch
- **Apical bud:** bud at the end/tip of a branch
- **Lateral bud:** bud or buds on the sides of a branch
- **Bud scale:** hard covering on the outside of buds to protect the young leaves within
- **Bud scale scar:** scar left on the branch when the bud scales fall off to reveal the inner leaves
- **Leaf scar:** scar on the branch left when a leaf falls off the branch
- **Vascular bundle scar:** Within each leaf scar there are one or more vascular bundle scars, each representing the vascular bundles that ran from the branch into the leaf when it was attached.
- **Lenticel:** small “breathing holes” that can be seen on the outside of a branch

**Other plant facts:**

- Leaves can grow in an opposite, alternate, or whorled arrangement along a branch
- Plants grow from the tip out, not from the root up
- Horse chestnut have a “sticky” bud
- Paper birch also have breathing holes on their trunk
- Osoberry have a chambered pith

## How to Identify plants in winter?

- Leaves: Usually, you will find them on the ground in winter. Can look at the shape of the leaf and the leaf vein
- Winter flowers: such as beaked hazelnut and osoberry
- Where it is growing: look at where the plant is growing and what kind of condition (such as dry, wet etc.)
- Refer to books/experts

Then we went for walk along the Lost Lagoon looking at specific plants there

## Specific Species Facts

### Willow

- We viewed a golden weeping willow, which has distinctive weeping branches
- The buds have only a single bud scale wrapping around the bud “like a tongue”

### Osoberry

- Originally referred to as Indian Plum, but now referred to as osoberry
- One of the first native plants to flower with white flowers
- Leaves and bark smell like cucumber

Note: Generally shrubs are differentiated from trees, as shrubs have multiple stems.

### Flowering Currant

- Usually, we see these as pink or red in colour, however there is also a white cultivar
- Important plant for pollinators, such as hummingbirds

### Salmonberry

- Just starting to bloom (mid February) with dark pink flowers
- Branches grow in a “zig-zag” pattern
- Upper branches have no prickles, while lower branches have prickles

**Note:** It is useful to record when you first see a plant bloom/fruit every year. This act of recording changes in plants every year is called “phenology”. An example of this was done by Henry David Thureau in his book *Walden’s Pond*. Scientists can refer to these records of plants to track changes over time.

### Beaked Hazelnut

- A native nut tree that flowers in the winter
- Has multiple stems (an exception to the general rule of generally shrubs having multiple stems)

### Red Alder

- A native tree
- Has female (more rounded) and male (longer and thinner) catkins

- Catkins are flowers that do not have petals, as they do not need pollinating insects. They instead, rely on the wind for pollination
- Have “clubbed buds” that stick out from the stem
- It is called “red alder” because of the red dye that is inside the trunk, which is traditionally used for dyeing textiles and baskets
- Red alder adds nitrogen back into the soil, so it is often the first tree to grow in disturbed sites

#### **Red twig dogwood**

- Opposite leaf arrangement vs willow, which is alternate
- Black dagger-like buds
- Distinctive red branches

#### **Paper birch tree**

- Our native birch tree has less bright white bark, as compared to other birch trees
- The bark has breathing holes (lenticel)
- Dark catkins are arranged in groups of 2-3

#### **Hardhack**

- Native flower often found near riparian habitat (wet areas)
- Tiny buds with hair that look silver in colour
- Seeds remain on the plant in winter

#### **Cascara**

- Almost always misidentified as red alder (because of the white patches on its bark)
- Overharvested for medicine (its leaves can be consumed as a laxative)

#### **Cottonwood**

- Buds can be collected from fallen branches and made into a “Balm of Gilead” by soaking in oil or in a double boiler and mixing with bees wax to make a salve

#### **Sumac**

- Multiple compound leaf
- Produces fruit (berries)
- Can be made into a lemonade
- Have a unique, orderly branching pattern