

Garry Oaks Ecosystems Recovery Team - Plants at Risk Fact Sheets

The Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team (GOERT), formed in June 1999, has been involved in various projects this past year including the production of a series of fact sheets about plants at risk in Garry oak and associated ecosystems. The first of these fact sheets are to be released in 2002 or 2003. They will be arranged in a field manual about plants and other species at risk. They will be distributed to public and private land managers, land stewards and field personnel who are involved in the management and restoration of Garry oak and associated ecosystems. The field manual is intended to increase field recognition of plants at risk in Garry oak and associated ecosystems, to encourage awareness of their critical habitats and distribution and to provide guidance regarding management and protection of these species at risk.

Garry oak (*Quercus garryana*) ecosystems, and the complex of closely related coastal bluff, maritime meadow, vernal pool, grassland, rock outcrop, and transitional forest ecosystems of southwest British Columbia, are important for their great beauty and their biological diversity. Over recent decades, habitat conversion of the oak and associated ecosystems to agricultural and urban uses has occurred at an alarming and accelerating rate. Habitat loss, fragmentation, invasion by exotic species, altered fire regimes and other factors pose serious and ongoing threats to Garry oak and associated ecosystems throughout their range in Canada.

Garry oak and associated ecosystems are home to 91 species, including 60 plants, that have been designated as “at risk” in British Columbia. Twenty-one of the species have also been listed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), but many more are likely candidates for national listing upon assessment by COSEWIC. Very small population sizes, limited numbers of occurrences, rapid or pronounced population declines and other indicators associated with these species suggest that extinction or extirpation (local extinction) is possible or likely unless recov-

ery actions are taken. Although some of these species, particularly those that reach the northern limits of their distribution in Canada, have always been rare, evidence indicates that general declines are widespread and in urgent need of attention. Garry oak plant communities, recognized as conservation targets by the British Columbia government, have been ranked as imperilled and critically imperilled within the province and are thus in need of conservation attention.

The field manual is designed for use in the field, and will include additional fact sheets about invertebrates and vertebrates at risk in Garry oak and associated ecosystems. There will also be a companion field manual of *Invasive Species of Garry Oak and Associated Ecosystems in British Columbia*. Completion of all the insert sheets for both manuals will take a number of years, and of course is dependent upon funding. The field manuals will be sent to a selected list of user groups, free of charge.

The Plants at Risk fact sheets will include the following information: English and scientific species name, including family name and other scientific names; risk status; range/known distribution; field description; life history information; habitat and ecological characteristics; why the species is at risk; what you can do for the species; and references. There will be an accompanying distribution map of the species in British Columbia, a photograph of the plant (where available) and a line drawing.

The fact sheets were compiled by Brenda Costanzo, on behalf of the Plants at Risk Recovery Action Group under GOERT. Funding to date has been provided by the Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk. Partners include the British Columbia Conservation Data Centre of the BC Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management and the Nature Conservancy of Canada.

For more information, see the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team web site at: <http://www.goert.ca>