



HATChat

Habitat Acquisition Trust

A Legacy of Responsible Citizenship

If you venture past the coffee shops and restaurants high on Quadra Street, through Royal Oak, down the hill and into West Saanich, it is possible to feel completely apart from the city. You'll find yourself on thin, twisting roads lined with Douglas-fir, Garry Oak, Arbutus, and a sense of fading ecological history. The Tod Creek watershed is threatened by traffic, decreased biodiversity, increasingly endangered, destroyed and degraded wetlands, and a polluted Prospect Lake. Ric and Frances Hunter are using a conservation covenant to combat the erosion of the natural land and preserve the habitat in perpetuity.

A conservation covenant is a promise. Ideally, such covenants restrict land use and can be used to prohibit subdivision, protect a wetland or mature forest development, and limit logging practices to ecologically sustainable forestry. Each covenant is tailored to the distinct character of the land in question and the conservation goals of its owners.

Their property is unique because of the maturing forest and Garry Oak Woodland. In addition to a number of Douglas-firs that are four hundred years and older, there are well-utilized wildlife trees and an ancient nurse log with three mature trees growing out of it. Wildlife on the property includes Blue listed (Provincially vulnerable) Seaside bittercress (*Cardamine angulata*), Red listed (Provincially endangered) Phantom Orchid (*Cephalanthera austiniiae*), river otter, mink, grey squirrel, owls (barred and Western screech), Pileated woodpeckers, bald eagles, wrens, warblers, swallows, brown creeper (nesting) and many other bird species. The land is part of a larger local network of remnant natural green spaces in the area such as Mount Work to the west and Elk and Beaver Lake Regional Parks to the east.

"I don't think that property ownership in any day and age—but particularly in our time—should mean we have the right to destroy it," Ric says. "That's something that simply has to change." Ric and Frances have spent the last three and a



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– Ric Hunter

half decades living their philosophy and they felt a conservation covenant was the next logical step to secure the success of their efforts. Ric views it as more of a responsibility than a legacy. "Those of us who care about the environment simply have to stick our necks out and do it," he says. "It's just another thing we can do to help save the planet, and people have to take that responsibility when it's before them."

– DARIN STEINKEY, EDITOR

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Back to Back Land

As you enjoy the fruit of your labour, you probably stop to think about how your estate will be divided up. Aside from a surviving spouse and children there is, of course, Mr. Harper and Mr. Campbell—the Federal and Provincial governments. Once they take their share there may not be much left to give to deserving charitable causes. Here are several strategies you can use to reduce taxes.

One such strategy is often referred to as a Back-to-Back Annuity. What? Let me explain. The bottom line is you can increase what your loved ones and charities receive through simple planning.

Let's say you have \$100,000 of investments that you don't require for income producing purposes or capital needs. Also, suppose the tax implications of cashing it in are not severe. With this \$100,000 you can purchase what is called an Annuity. There are many types of annuities available, and you should get advice on the best one to use, but let us suppose the one you choose will pay you about \$700 per month.

The second part of this strategy requires you to take out permanent life insurance. For illustration purposes, let us suppose the monthly life insurance cost is \$600. Remember the annuity payment of \$700? That is what pays for the insurance premium and you have just increased your estate value. Because life insurance is not taxed at death, the \$100,000 will get paid to your children, your favourite charity (which will reduce your taxes upon death) and/or go towards paying taxes upon death.

What about that piece of land adjoining your property that you walk around from time to time? Do you hate the thought of future generations building condos on it? By gifting the property to a qualified

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Pacific Ninebark



Though I am hesitant to admit it as I bask in the glorious sunshine, and water my still-thirsty garden... autumn is approaching! Fall is the best time to plant native shrubs and trees, as they will continue to set down roots into the Autumnal soil. This is the only time of year that, once the rain begins, you can forget about them until the warmth of spring returns!

One of my favourite native shrubs is Pacific ninebark (*Physocarpus capitatus*). Just try saying it aloud a few times and observe how it rolls off the tongue! Pacific ninebark is a deciduous shrub in the Rose Family. It grows from 2-4 metres and has arching branches. Some say there are nine layers of bark, leading to its name. Ninebark displays peeling reddish bark in winter and greets each spring with bright maple-like green leaves and showy clusters of creamy-white flowers with long pink stamens. In autumn these shrubs shine with golden yellow-orange leaves. The unique fruit are inflated glossy-red pods that split open to release seeds. It is a fast growing shrub that prefers full sun to

part shade. For the garden, it prefers moist sites and will tolerate seasonal flooding, as well as summer droughts. Try growing it along with Nootka Rose (*Rosa nutkana*) and hardhack (*Spiraea douglasii*).

Humans are not the only species to enjoy the variable display of fruit, flowers and bark. Pacific ninebark is extremely beneficial to wildlife. The abundant flowers provide food for the spring Azure butterfly larvae and nectar for many insects, including bees. Pacific ninebark provides cover and nesting habitat for birds and small mammals while deer will browse on buds, twigs and leaves.

Little maintenance is required for this native shrub once established. Minimal pruning is recommended to maintain the shape of the plant. To enhance the exfoliating bark, which for some is its chief attraction, only prune one third of the older branches in any one year. For a more youthful looking plant, hard prune all of the older branches in the spring.

Look for Pacific ninebark at nursery centres or try propagating by hardwood cuttings or seed. For more information, visit the Pacific Northwest Native Wildlife Gardening website at www.tardigrade.org/natives/index.html.

– WENDY TYRRELL, COVENANTS & ACQUISITIONS COORDINATOR

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Simon Says...

SIMON PHILP is the Commercial Account Manager at HSBC in Victoria. He served as HAT Treasurer from 2003 until the most recent Annual General Meeting when he was elected President.

“When I was asked to join the Board I saw it as an opportunity to give back to an organization that had been willing to come into my community and invest their time. It seemed the logical way to do my part to empower and encourage other communities to do similar work.

My role is to look ahead and help make reasonable, responsible fiscal decisions that allow HAT to fulfill its commitment to the Region.

If you are too large an organization it is impossible to see what is happening on the ground, and at a time when people want to behave better, HAT is able to provide leadership at the community level.

We've always tried to recognize and appreciate our members but the key is to make sure they realize they are an integral part of our outreach into the community. ”

How many
Conservationists
does it take
to change a
lightbulb?

More than one hundred crowded into the Burnside Gorge Community Centre for the 8th annual Conservation Connection Forum to come up with an answer. They discussed climate change, fundraising, attracting and retaining volunteers, marine issues, the Conservation Framework, Green bylaws, Wetlands best practices, and local food issues. It was a great opportunity to connect and re-connect with other groups that are working on environmental issues in our region.

Thank you to everyone who made HAT's annual Conservation Connection Forum a success!



"Back to Back Land"

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charitable organisation (such as the Habitat Acquisition Trust) you can protect the land, get a great tax break, and protect your right to live on it, if you wish. There are several ways to do this.

You can donate the property directly to a charity and receive a charitable donations tax credit in return. In addition, if the land is ecologically sensitive you could qualify for further significant tax breaks for donations certified under the Ecological Gifts Program.

This program also applies if you wish to register a conservation covenant against your land, rather than making an outright donation. A conservation covenant is a voluntary, written agreement between you and a conservation organization in which you promise to protect the land in specific ways. The conservation organization holds the covenant and, if necessary, can enforce it. The covenant is filed with the Land Title Office and is binding for both you and future owners of the land.

Alternatively, you can donate a "life estate" to a charity. This entitles you to live on your property for the rest of your life. Once you no longer live there, it will transfer to the charity. The donation may carry some tax benefits depending on the value of the property and the length of time you live on it. However, there might be some restrictions on your use of the property in this scenario.

Finally, you can also make a bequest of land to a charity in your will. In this case your estate would receive the benefit of a charitable tax credit.

These are strategies that require you to get advice from a professional. For more information on how to contribute to your favourite charity in a tax-preferred way, call Stephen Whipp, CFP, Certified Financial Planner, Manulife Securities Insurance in Victoria at 250-405-3550.

– STEPHEN WHIPP



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