



# Become a Nature Steward

*Join the international initiative to protect 30% of the planet by 2030*

We are all part of the **interconnected web of life** – from whales to fungi.

Healthy biodiversity **sustains us all.**

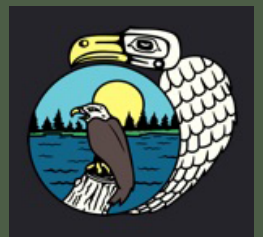


Since only about 4% of Thetis is protected, **we can't rely solely on our nature reserves** to sustain biodiversity. **It's up to all of us.** With over 90% of the island privately owned, all Thetis Islanders can play an important role in caring for nature.

The Nature Stewards Program encourages residents to play an active role in stewarding and regenerating the land through habitat restoration, rewilding, and preservation. **Read on to find out how you can help.**



Many millennia before the first settlers, Coast Salish ancestors lived on Thetis and throughout these Salish Sea "Gulf Islands". Remnants of their villages, clam gardens, middens, sacred burial grounds and daily life exist here. Today, we are learning how to incorporate local Indigenous perspectives and practices into our thinking and relationships with the natural world. We are honoured and grateful to live on the traditional territory of the Punelexutth (Penelakut) First Nation.





## You live in a special place!

Thetis is part of an extremely small and sensitive ecological region called the "Coastal Douglas-fir Biogeoclimatic Zone" (CDF).



The CDF is found only on southeast Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands, and the southwest mainland coast.

Over thousands of years a unique mix of trees, plants, and animals have found a niche in this relatively dry, warm, sunny zone. The CDF has the highest diversity of plant species in BC and the highest diversity of overwintering birds in Canada.

Development has heavily impacted the CDF zone and its rich biodiversity. Almost half of the original forested land has been lost to human activity. Of the remaining forest, less than 1% is old growth. Many species and 98% of the ecological communities are at risk of extinction. We need to work hard at protecting what's left.

## Ways you can Help!

The most important thing you can do on your property to make up for the loss of old growth is to **save or create enough space for native trees, plants, and other natural elements and living things to co-exist.**

When we all do this, we make an interconnected natural corridor that links wildlife habitat on private land with the island's nature reserves.

**That's thinking like we're all part of the island's ecology!**

### ✔ Let the forest grow old.

While old growth trees (250 yrs or older) still live on Thetis Island, **no old growth forests remain.** Over time, if left alone, younger forests will develop old growth characteristics: a layered canopy with a mix of tree species and ages; an understory of shrubs, mosses, lichens and fungi; and lots of standing dead trees (snags) and decomposing wood lying on the forest floor. All of this diversity provides habitat for wildlife.

### ✔ Allow native trees and shrubs to establish and regenerate.

Let some areas in your garden go a bit wild, while keeping any invasive plants under control. Help nurture and conserve a mix of trees, shrubs, flowers, and grasses.

### ✔ Garden for wildlife.

Boost biodiversity by planting flowering plants that attract wildlife like butterflies, bees, dragonflies, and hummingbirds. Choose alternatives to pesticides for your gardening.



### ✔ Keep forest health in mind while managing fire risk.

You can reduce the risk of fire to your house and property while enhancing biodiversity. Many native trees and plants adapted to the CDF zone are fire-resistant. Healthy forests, and logs on the forest floor, hold moisture, making them a natural firebreak. Contact the Structure Protection Unit Auxiliary of the Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department for more information.

### ✔ Make room for "others".

From native pollinators of fruits and vegetables to cavity nesting birds which keep mice and insects under control, we need wild critters. Each spring, swallows and other migratory birds fly from Mexico and South America to nest on Thetis. They depend on cavities in standing dead trees (snags) and birdhouses we put up. Many birds, and other species, are stressed by habitat loss and climate change. Actions we take on our properties ensure they find enough places to nest and feed their young.



### ✔ Get rid of those invasives!

Invasive plants and shrubs are not native and tend to spread aggressively, out-competing native plants. The biggest culprits we are trying to control on Thetis include Scotch broom (below right), Daphne, English holly (below left), tansy ragwort, and English ivy. In some spots they are completely taking over and stressing the forest understory.



### ✔ Re-wild your shoreline.

If you live beside the ocean or a freshwater stream, pond or wetland, plant a wide buffer of native trees and shrubs to provide habitat, shade, and food for young fish and other aquatic and marine species. The root systems will prevent shoreline erosion too!



### ✔ Thetis relies on groundwater and rainfall, so conserving water and wetlands is crucial!

If your property has a stream, pond, or even a winter-season wet area, you've got an even more precious resource for nature conservation.

**"As we work to heal the earth, the earth heals us."**

**- Robin Wall Kimmerer, author of Braiding Sweetgrass**

We are grateful for the traditional knowledge shared by Ken Thomas and Elder Augie Sylvester from the Penelakut First Nation, and work done by Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT), Gabriola Lands and Trails Trust (GaLTT), and Islands Trust Conservancy informing this document. We acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia, the Stewart Fund at the Vancouver Foundation, and the Government of Canada's Summer Job program.

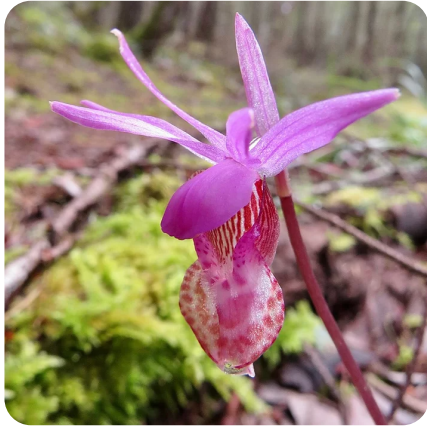




# Thinking of developing your property?

## Take time to learn more...

About this sensitive island ecology and how you can help on your property and beyond.

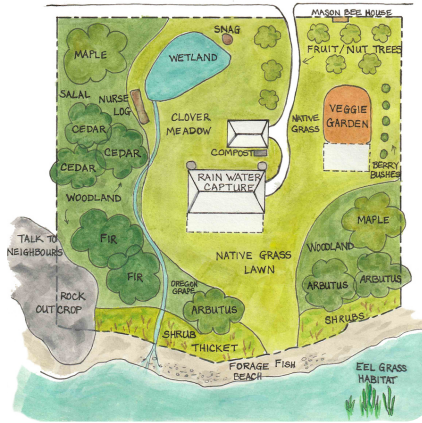


## Learn from traditional knowledge holders.

Invite an Indigenous or other local knowledge holder to walk the land with you and share what they know about past use, medicinal and edible plants, and traditional ways to steward the place where you live so that it is still here and thriving for your children, your grandchildren and their grandchildren.



## Make a plan with nature in mind...



## Consult.

Before you start clearing, we ask you to seek out good advice from qualified ecological professionals, arborists and eco-friendly gardeners and builders on how to sensitively remove trees and make other landscaping decisions.

## Be the change.

Many of us moved here because we were drawn by community, lifestyle, and the island's stunning natural beauty. Many residents already preserve nature on their property, but with increasing development, land-use decisions we all make on our private properties will be the crucial difference between a healthy island ecosystem and one that is fragmented and impoverished.

## Explore

A handful of helpful resources:

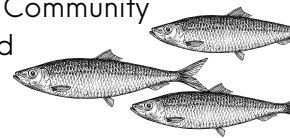
- Thetis Island CDF Fact Sheet (Islands Trust Conservancy)
- A Sensitive Ecosystem Guide for Islands Trust Area Property Owners
- Choosing a Building Site on your Lot fact sheet (Islands Trust)
- Gardening with Native Plants (Habitat Acquisition Trust)
- Invasive Species Council of BC
- Green Shores (Stewardship Centre of BC)
- Ecosystem Guide: A Hul'q'umi'num' language guide to plants and animals of southern Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands and the Salish Sea

These resources and others are provided on the ThINC website: [Nature Stewards Program webpage](#)

## Walkabouts Coming Soon!

ThINC plans to launch the 'Nature Stewards Program' in fall 2022. We'll offer a personal walkabout on your property to help you conserve and protect biodiversity with nature-friendly gardening and landscaping ideas.

Contact us to join our Community Science programs and help protect birds, bats, and fish.



Thetis Island Nature Conservancy (ThINC) is a registered charity located on a small Gulf Island in the Salish Sea off the coast of British Columbia. Our goals are nature education, conservation and stewardship of natural ecosystems, and promotion of community food security.

Visit our website to contact us or for more information: [thetislandnatureconservancy.org](http://thetislandnatureconservancy.org)