



*I can't have a garden because I live in an apartment, and besides, I just don't have enough room to make a difference! Sound familiar? Keep reading and find out how even a tiny balcony garden can add to a neighbourhood. This is the second article in our Nature's Services series, which explores the benefits (nature's services) that we derive directly or indirectly from small-scale plantings such as backyards and balconies..*

## SMALL SPACES, BIG BENEFITS

### Balcony gardens and nature's services

In spite of their small size, balcony gardens are an important source of nature's services. In fact, because other green spaces (ie. parks and backyards) are rare in high-density urban areas, the contributions balcony gardens make to quality of life in these neighbourhoods are especially important. For example, they reduce atmospheric pollutants in three different ways: (1) by directly removing the pollutant through uptake by leaf stomata, (2) by intercepting particles on leaf surfaces, and (3) by regulating building temperatures, thereby reducing the need for heating/cooling and associated fuel emissions. As well as cleaning the air, balcony gardens provide habitat for wildlife such as birds and insects and give people aesthetic pleasure and enjoyment.



### Creating a balcony garden

So you have decided to add to nature's services in your neighbourhood by creating a balcony garden. Here are several factors to keep in mind in designing your garden.

*Space:* You have limited space on your balcony so remember to think about how big a plant will be at maturity when deciding what to plant. Using hanging baskets, wall planters, and vines is a great way to increase your available growing space.

*Weight:* Weight is another constraint you should keep in mind. Using lighter containers and soil (eg. plastic containers, peat-based soil) ensures that you don't have to worry about your garden becoming too heavy.

*Balcony micro-climates:* Plants on your balcony face a unique climate as they are often sheltered from the rain by other balconies and exposed to more wind than plants in conventional gardens. As a result, your balcony garden will need to be watered frequently. You may also wish to plant species that can tolerate dry conditions.

*Wildlife Habitat:* Keep the birds and insects that may be visiting your garden in mind when choosing plants. Native plants with berries provide food for many birds while hummingbirds feed from plants with bright, trumpet-like flowers. Butterflies will also be

attracted to native plants with brightly coloured, fragrant flowers. Adding a shallow dish of water or bird-bath is another easy way to add to the habitat value of your balcony. You can even add a nesting box to your garden, providing shelter for birds such as black-capped chickadees.

*-Nadia Pedley, Nature's Services Inventory Coordinator*

Contact us at 604-527-5522 or [iue@douglas.bc.ca](mailto:iue@douglas.bc.ca) for more information on balcony gardens. If you are thinking of creating or enhancing a balcony garden, you may be eligible for our **7TH ANNUAL NATURE'S HAVENS CHALLENGE!** See [pg.4](#) for more information about the challenge.

## THE GREEN LINK

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We are always trying to reduce our paper consumption--let us know if we can send you your copy of The Green Link by e-mail.

*Are special use areas such as airports, cemeteries, golf courses, and post-secondary institutions sources of urban wildlife habitat? We recently completed biophysical inventories of eight representative special use sites in the Lower Mainland as part of our Special Places Project in order to find an answer to that question. This, the third article in our Special Places series, focuses on university and college campuses as habitat.*

## HABITAT 101



Canada Geese on the lawn at Trinity Western University

We generally think of post-secondary institutions as sources of learning rather than of food or shelter for wildlife. However, Rosalie Aguilar, the IUE Special Places Project Coordinator, found that post-secondary campuses can provide habitat for wildlife as well as students. She assessed the habitat value of the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) and of Trinity Western University (TWU), finding that both sites provided some refuge and cover habitat for wildlife travelling between park lands. In general, the habitat quality at post-secondary institutions depends on the type and quantity of vegetation; campuses with larger areas of native trees and shrubs provide better quality habitat than campuses with only a few trees and large lawn areas.

To learn more about Rosalie's findings, contact the IUE for a print copy of the Special Places Report (\$10) or download it from our website in

## NEW WESTMINSTER ENVIRONMENTAL ALMANAC COMING SOON!

We are just putting the finishing touches on the New Westminster Environmental Almanac, which is the third environmental almanac published by the IUE. The almanac will raise awareness of the natural environment in New Westminster as well acting as a resource for New Westminster residents who are interested in helping the local environment. It is full of information on the history and natural history of New Westminster, parks and green spaces in the area, local stewardship groups and environmental initiatives, and environmental citizenship and sustainable living. The IUE would like to thank the Georgia Basin Ecosystem Initiative for funding this project and the City of New Westminster for all of their assistance. Contact Greg Norton at 604-527-5522 or [iue@douglas.bc.ca](mailto:iue@douglas.bc.ca) to find out how to get a copy of the almanac or to book a FREE workshop on material covered in the almanac.

*-Greg Norton, Almanac editor*

## IUE BEGINS CHANGING PLACES WITH REAL ESTATE FOUNDATION GRANT

In January, we launched the *Changing Places: Development and Implementation of Green Space Management Plans* project. Supported by a \$24 500 grant from the Real Estate Foundation and in partnership with the Cities of Surrey and Coquitlam, this project will identify the type of information required for the management of urban green spaces and develop strategies for the implementation of green space management plans. IUE staff will also be conducting biophysical inventories of parks in Surrey and surveying street trees in Coquitlam. The Changing Places Project includes a one day workshop on urban green space management which will take place in June 2003. Watch for details in the next newsletter or contact Nadine at 604-527-5522 or [iue@douglas.bc.ca](mailto:iue@douglas.bc.ca) for more information. *-Nadine Pinnell, Project Coordinator*

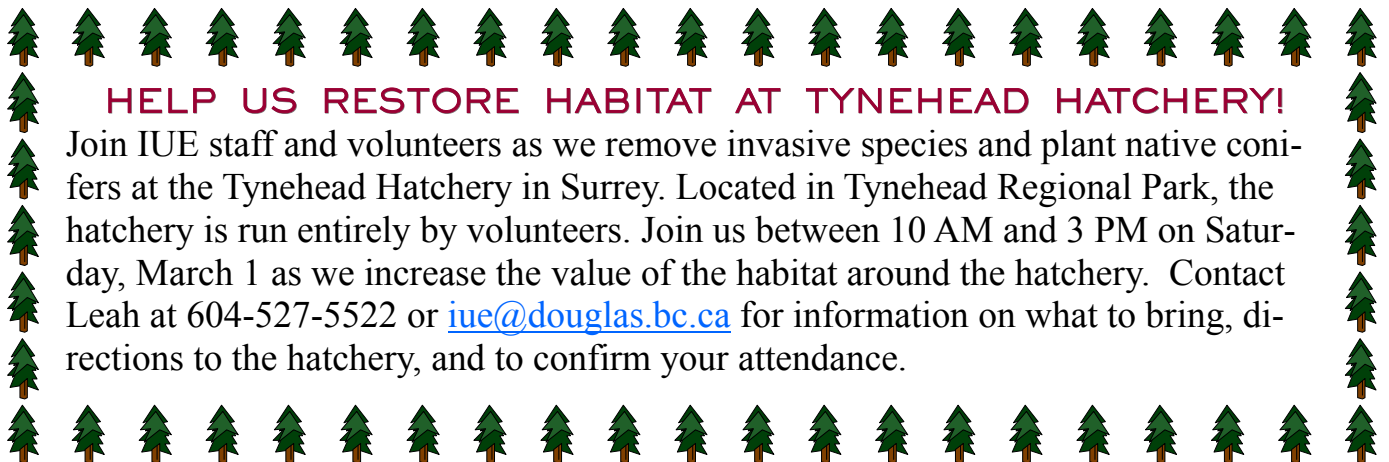
## WINTER WORK AT THE IUE



Students from Millside Elementary School and Centennial High School help IUE and City of Coquitlam staff plant native plants in Mackin Park in Coquitlam on November 20, 2002

The IUE planting crew did two streamside plantings in Coquitlam during November and December. On November 20, student volunteers from Centennial School and Millside Elementary School,

Parks staff from the City of Coquitlam, and staff from the IUE planted over 400 plants beside Nelson Creek on the east side of Mackin Park. Then on December 5, student volunteers from Archbishop Carney Secondary School, Coquitlam Parks Staff, and IUE staff members planted over 300 plants on the west side of the park. We were lucky enough to have beautiful weather on both days, which is unusual for winter plantings. We used native plants in both areas, planting species such as Kinnickinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) that provide food for wildlife and such as Western Sword Fern (*Polystichum munitum*) that provide shelter for wildlife. Thanks to all our volunteers and to the City of Coquitlam Parks department for helping enhance the wildlife habitat value of the park. *-Leah Efford, IUE Eco-Education Coordinator*



**HELP US RESTORE HABITAT AT TYNEHEAD HATCHERY!**

Join IUE staff and volunteers as we remove invasive species and plant native conifers at the Tynehead Hatchery in Surrey. Located in Tynehead Regional Park, the hatchery is run entirely by volunteers. Join us between 10 AM and 3 PM on Saturday, March 1 as we increase the value of the habitat around the hatchery. Contact Leah at 604-527-5522 or [iue@douglas.bc.ca](mailto:iue@douglas.bc.ca) for information on what to bring, directions to the hatchery, and to confirm your attendance.

# THE 7<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL NATURE'S HAVENS CHALLENGE

(FORMERLY THE BACKYARD HABITAT ENHANCEMENT CHALLENGE)

We challenge you to create a natural yard that provides habitat for wildlife and enhances your quality of life. Make your yard, garden, or balcony a haven for birds, butterflies and other wildlife!

All those interested will be able to attend a **FREE** workshop on creating backyard habitat later this spring. Contact us at 604-527-5522 or [iue@douglas.bc.ca](mailto:iue@douglas.bc.ca) to register or to learn more about the 2003 challenge!



ROBIN NESTLINGS IN A BALCONY PLANTER

## What Do Green Spaces In The City Mean To You?



### A Green Links Creative Writing Contest For Students in Grades 5 - 12

Put on your thinking caps,  
sharpen your pencils, and  
share your thoughts about green space in the city with us!

Contest open to prose and poetry submissions

Special category for ESL students

Deadline for entries is **April 28, 2003**

Contact us at 604-527-5522 or [iue@douglas.bc.ca](mailto:iue@douglas.bc.ca) for entry forms and more information.

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- Habitat Restoration Program, Douglas College
- Habitat Conservation Trust Fund
- Human Resources Development Canada Job Creation Partnership Program
- Greater Vancouver Regional District
- EJLB Foundation
- Environment Canada– EcoAction 2000
- Home Depot
- Public Conservation Assistance Fund
- The Real Estate Foundation of BC
- Vancouver Foundation
- Trans Mountain Pipeline Corporation of Delta
- City of New Westminster
- Colony Farms Park Association
- Tree Canada Foundation
- Art Knapp Plantland
- BC Gas
- BC Hydro
- Toronto Dominion Friends of the Environment Fund Burnaby, Surrey, Vancouver, and Coquitlam
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