

SUNNYSIDE ACRES URBAN FOREST PARK

By Roger Phillips, Sunnyside Acres' Director at Large

2020 had its good gardening moments, particularly the number of Open Garden visits to give us a sense of calm, order, and colour in masked, lonely times. Thank you to Linda and SSGC members for your collective vision and organization. ~Roger

A 480-ACRE NATURAL AREA TO EXPLORE

There is another natural area that can be visited throughout the year and that requires absolutely no gardening . . . no pruning, weeding, clipping, watering, fertilizing, repotting, or raking . . . it's the Urban Forest Park* named **Sunnyside Acres**. You can find it growing between the boundaries of 20th–28th Avenues and 144th–148th Streets, and bisected by 24th Avenue.

Like most gardens, it is best enjoyed at a slow pace with the advantage of quiet seating and listening at several benches scattered along the main trails. While resting on a bench or just standing still for several minutes, you become more sensitized to the sound of the wind in the branches a hundred feet above you, the soft moistness of the air, and the sounds of bird activities close by as they realize that you are not a threat.

On your passage along the trails you can pass a fallen tree with its root saucer now vertical and exposing compacted sub-soil that was compressed by glaciers a hundred thousand years ago. There's an "erratic" boulder near 148th that has spent 11,000 years watching its freedom from the ice pack grow into a developing green ecosystem.

Roughly, 4000 years ago, the Coast Salish people linked up with Fraser Valley communities along

trails like the Semiahmoo Trail crossing the northeast part of the forest and leading down to the Nikomekl River.

There are the 100-year-old ghosts of the first loggers standing on the springboard cuts that facilitated the felling of the huge cedars. Huckleberry bushes and ferns grow on the rotting stumps' surfaces now.

There are the remnants of the loggers' camp and field kitchen close to the athletic park, unearthed by a site rehabilitation effort a decade ago and re-covered under native shrub growth.

Sunnyside Acres was the focus of the largest peaceful environmental movement in South Surrey. In 1988, a referendum was passed establishing in perpetuity the area as an Urban Forest Park and burying the many plans for developing it as a municipal airport, golf course, or housing. As a result, the Douglas-fir trees have doubled in height, most of them being over 100 years old and 150 feet in height—an evolving forest type classified as the Coastal Douglas-fir zone, a rarity in the Lower Mainland. We sometimes need reminding that we are living in the finest climate for plant growth in Canada: sheltered from Pacific Ocean blasts by Vancouver Island, with warm, sunny summers and mild, wet winters.

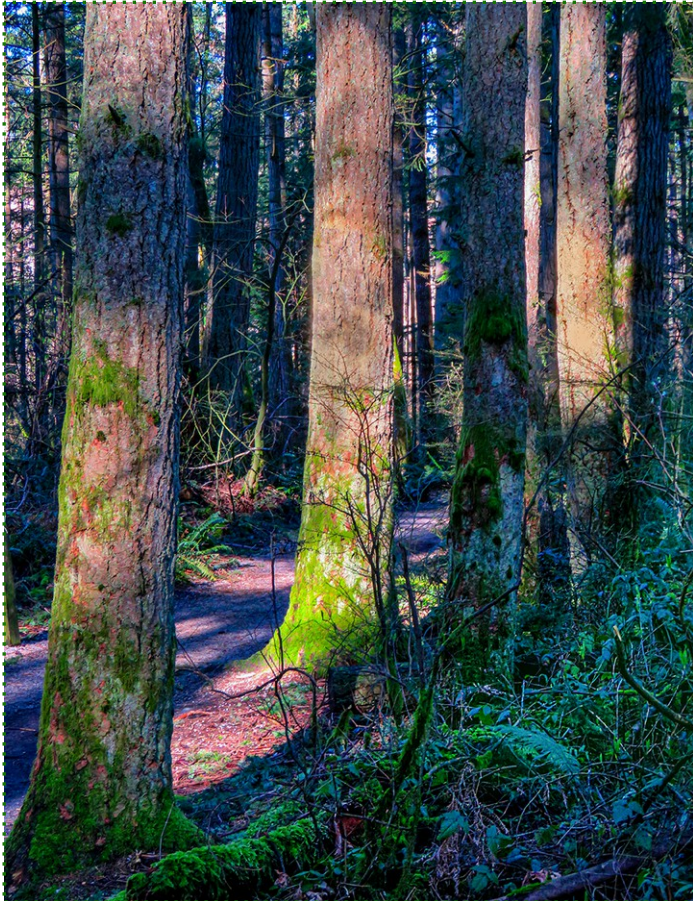
The Forest Park is administered by the City of Surrey, but with a difference: that being the close cooperation with the Sunnyside Acres Heritage Society, who act as stewards, advising the city of any natural or man-made hazards and encouraging the public through education and membership in a healthy advocacy that leaves the forest alone to evolve naturally.

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Perhaps in later forest generations, which have many more years than human generations (about 10:1 !!), the climax forest of huge cedars will once again hold sway.

In order to encourage membership, the Sunnyside Acres Heritage Society is launching a **“Foster the**



100-year-old Douglas-fir trees on Chickadee Trail



Sunnyside Acres

Forest” program that will personalize a connection with an outstanding tree. Foster members will receive an individualized character description of the tree including information about how it is contributing to a healthier climate through carbon sequestering, oxygen replenishment, and water retention, and its physical characteristics and role in the ecosystem. As you walk, cycle, or drive by your foster tree, you can nod, wave, say a prayer, or make your virtual connection with it while leaving it to flourish without interference.

Come and refresh yourself with a walk amongst the trees.

If you wish to find out more about Sunnyside Acres, have a look at our website

sunnysideacres.ca.



Oemleria cerasiformis

** By definition, an Urban Forest Park is "a large tract of wooded land located within a populous community dedicated for the public's use and enjoyment and to the management, conservation, and enhancement of the native flora and fauna."*