

# Island <sup>Reprint</sup> Tides

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## ***Wildflowers: Islands Endangered Species~ Brennan Simpson***

*Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,  
Gather ye thistles from the hay,  
But gather ye anything else around here  
And you'll gather a spell in the slammer, my dear.*

It's not only in the Amazon Basin that wild plants are disappearing forever, it's happening right here on the Gulf Islands too. The reasons are the same in both places—logging, land clearing, road construction and total apathy on the part of most people. A while ago, new permanent residents on one of the Islands completely scalped their property and explained to neighbours that they were 'City folk' and that they didn't like 'wild things' in their garden. They then set out pots of plastic flowers on their deck.

Here on Mayne Island, the Columbian Lily (*Lilium columbianum*), has almost totally disappeared, although a few years ago it grew abundantly. Its favourite habitat was beside ditches, where it could get moisture and in the partial shade of tall trees. The roadsides were ideal. Unfortunately, however, roadsides get mowed now-a-days and this is often done in late June, when the grass is getting high, but also when the Columbian lily is getting ready to flower and set its seed. The result is that the plant never manages to reproduce itself and eventually becomes extinct.

It is quite common here to see visitors to the Island heading towards the ferry terminal with armfuls of wild flowers, which they have picked, probably from someone else's private property. What these people perhaps do not realise is that the flowers will be dead by the time they get them home and, even more importantly, the seeds which they would have produced

for next year's blossom have been removed from the Island.

Another menace to our native wild flowers is the person who digs them up and tries to transplant them in a garden. This might work for some plants, but we have several which require very specific conditions to survive, which only their native habitats possess and which will die if they are moved anywhere else.

It would be a step in the right direction if the little verse at the top of this column were true. Unfortunately, it isn't. They only plants which are actually protected by legislation in this province are the Dogwood, the Trillium and the Rhododendron. Work is being done to produce a wider list of endangered plants and this may eventually reach the stage of legislation also, for whatever that might be worth, since enforcement of this type of law has never received much priority in BC. So, at present, the only hope for saving some of these species lies in education the public at large. There is a poster showing photographs of fifteen endangered BC. wildflowers displayed in the Mayne Island Post Office and probably somewhere on the other Islands too. Several of these flowers grow on our Islands. If we were all to learn to identify them and then do whatever we could to leave them to grow in peace, free from the depredations of the human race, perhaps this would give them a chance to increase in numbers once more so that future generations of Islanders could enjoy them as we do.

*Brennan's wildflower articles are also published as a book Flowers at My Feet: West Wildflowers in Legend, Literature and Lore. ✍*

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