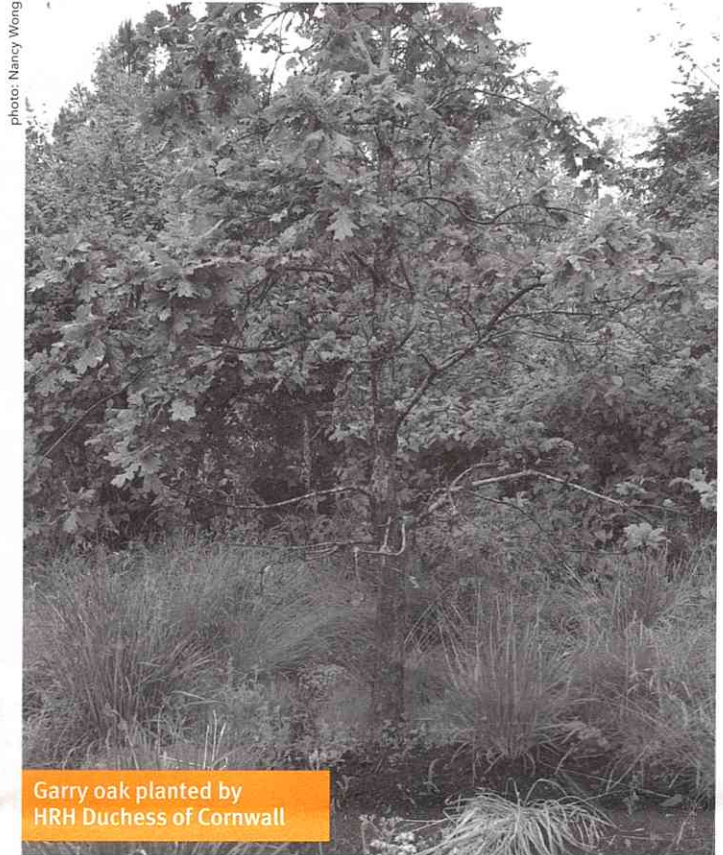




Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall planting Garry oak in 2009



Garry oak leaf



Garry oak planted by HRH Duchess of Cornwall

TREE TALK | Garry oak (*Quercus garryana*)

The Garry oak (*Quercus garryana*) is named for Nicholas Garry, Deputy-Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company from 1822-1835. Mr. Garry provided assistance to David Douglas, the botanist who first described this tree.

Quercus garryana is medium-sized with gnarly, spreading branches and dark green, leathery leaves. It grows naturally in Mediterranean climates (with mild temperatures and dry summers) and ranges from the Gulf Islands and the southern tip of Vancouver Island in BC down through Washington and Oregon to California. In the United States it is commonly referred to as Oregon white oak.

Garry oak is the dominant species of one of the rarest ecosystems in Canada - the Garry oak ecosystem. Consisting of open woodland or meadows, Garry oak ecosystems occur in areas that experience frequent fires. The fires, which do little harm to heat-resistant Garry oaks, suppress the growth of more sensitive tree species like arbutus and Douglas-fir. These warm, dry meadows dotted with Garry oaks form a rich community of inter-connected plant and animal species. First Nations peoples harvested some of these plants (such as edible camas bulbs) and would

deliberately set fires to maintain the meadows; encouraging the growth of 'useful' plants.

With European settlement came fire suppression, and other tree species were able to move in and dominate - turning meadows into woodlands. Subsequent agriculture and development has resulted in the loss of much of the Garry oak ecosystem and a number of associated species are now endangered. Most of the remaining Garry oak ecosystems are found in protected areas such as preserves and parks.

The future of this ecosystem is uncertain. Efforts are being made to restore habitat in some Garry oak ecosystems, and several botanical gardens, including UBC and us, have planted their own Garry oak meadows.

Here at the Garden, there are two areas in which to see Garry oaks. The first is the Garry oak meadow, containing many young trees, planted on the berm on Oak Street in front of the Visitor Centre and next to the circular drive-way. The other is the Garry oak bed located adjacent to the Entrance Plaza just left of the Visitor Centre. It is home to two, more mature, trees - one of which was planted by HRH Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall when she visited the Garden in 2009.