

Herbaceous Ecosystems

THIN SOILS, RICH DIVERSITY

What are Herbaceous Ecosystems?

Herbaceous ecosystems are natural grasslands, open meadows and sparsely vegetated hilltops. The shallow soils, characteristic of herbaceous ecosystems, support low-growing vegetation, such as grasses, forbs (low, broad-leaved plants) and colourful arrays of wildflowers, mosses and ancient lichens. Few trees and shrubs survive on these sites due to the shallow, fast-drying nature of the exposed soils.

Where are Herbaceous Ecosystems located?

Herbaceous ecosystems are found on bedrock outcroppings, hilltops, dunes and spits and in large openings within forested areas. These fragile ecosystems are found in small patches throughout the Islands Trust Area.



Chris Ferris

Herbaceous Ecosystems make up only 0.3% of Mayne Island.



Laura Stringer

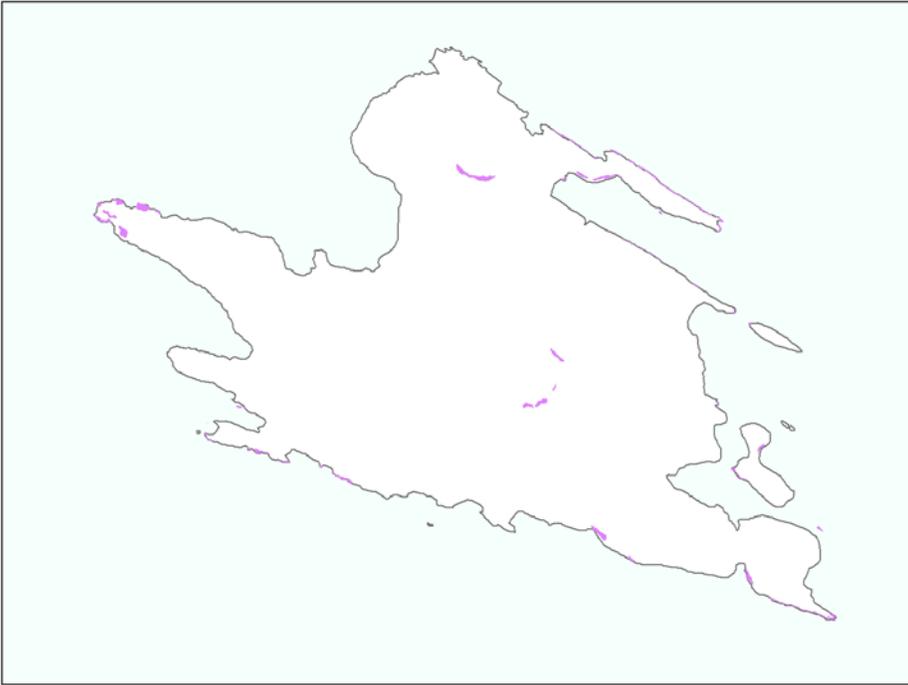
Why are Herbaceous Ecosystems important?

Due to their occurrence on highly exposed areas, herbaceous ecosystems provide extremely specialized micro-habitats for many species of rare butterflies, wildflowers and lichens. The lifecycles of certain rare species depend entirely on the specific conditions found within extremely small locations (some with an area of a few square centimeters) of herbaceous ecosystems.



Emily Gonzales

Herbaceous Ecosystems on Mayne Island



How can we protect Herbaceous Ecosystems?

The thin soils of herbaceous ecosystems are especially vulnerable to disturbance. Once plants are removed, the thin soil cover is stripped by rain and wind making it extremely hard for plants to re-establish on exposed bed-rock.

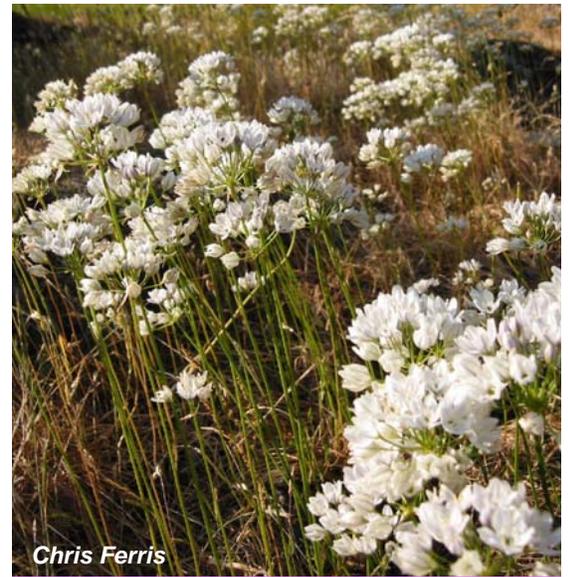
- Limit access and avoid any type of development to prevent soil and vegetation damage
- Create a vegetation buffer using native species to slow invasion by non-native species
- Actively control invasive species to reduce competition with native rare species
- Prevent disturbance of nesting or breeding areas by humans, livestock or pets, especially between March and August



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Associated Species

Animals

Alligator lizards, garter snakes, songbirds, bats, butterflies

Plants

Satin flower, blue-eyed Mary, Hooker's onion, dunegrass, hoary rock moss

Rare Species

Sharp-tailed snake, yellow montane-violet, rigid apple moss, Edith's checkerspot butterfly

For more information

Please visit the Islands Trust website:

www.islandstrust.bc.ca

*or call 1-250-405-5151 or
1-800-663-7867 (Enquiry BC)*