

Dr. Brian Starzomski

Dr. Brian Starzomski is the Ian McTaggart Cowan Professor of Biodiversity Conservation and Ecological Restoration at the University of Victoria. From 2019-2023 he was Director of the School of Environmental Studies at the University of Victoria. He is co-leader, with John Reynolds of Simon Fraser University, of the BC Biodiversity Program, a project to survey as many species as possible across Canada's most biodiverse province.

Dr. Doug Tallamy

Dr. Doug Tallamy is the T. A. Baker Professor of Agriculture in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware, where he has authored 112 research publications and has taught insect related courses for 44 years. Chief among his research goals is to better understand the many ways insects interact with plants and how such interactions determine the diversity of animal communities. His books include *Bringing Nature Home*, *The Living Landscape*, co-authored with Rick Darke, *Nature's Best Hope*, a New York Times Best Seller, *The Nature of Oaks*, winner of the American Horticultural Society's 2022 book award. In 2021 he cofounded Homegrown National Park with Michelle Alfandari (HomegrownNationalPark.org). His awards include recognition from The Garden Writer's Association, Audubon, The National Wildlife Federation, Allegheny College, Ecoforesters, The Garden Club of America, The Herb Society, and The American Horticultural Association.

Heidi Hitchcock

Heidi Hitchcock is a third-generation horticulturist and has been involved professionally in the industry for over 20 years. As an instructor with the Horticulture College of the Pacific, Heidi teaches courses in Landscape Design, Communication Skills, Business Practices, as well as courses in the Red Seal Certification Program, Master Gardener Program, and community education classes in garden design for home owners. In addition to teaching, Heidi operates her own business, Horticultura, specializing in garden coaching and design. Heidi works with residential clients, often partnering with others in the industry to bring design ideas to life.

Maria Vallana

Maria Valana is a horticulture instructor at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. She holds a Bachelor of Applied Science Degree, Provincial Instructor Diploma and a Red Seal designation in both Landscape and Plant Production. Maria worked as a gardener for the City of Kamloops for six years and has owned her own landscaping business since 2015. In the community, Maria enjoys sharing her passion by providing horticulture education to like-minded individuals. Maria is a regular instructor in the Master Gardener program in interior BC and the Lower Mainland. She is also a sought-after speaker at many Garden Clubs, Seedy Saturday, and other community events where she presents on a variety of topics. Growing up on a family farm in Southern Italy, she helped grow, harvest, and sell a wide range of vegetables and fruits. Her love for plants led to the purchase of her very own greenhouse where she now spends most of her free time tending to her plant babies and delights in exciting people about gardening, especially growing vegetables.

Dr. Tom Smiley

Dr. Tom Smiley is a Plant Physiologist and Soil Scientist at Bartlett Tree Experts. He conducts a wide range of research in arboriculture and urban forestry. He shares his focus on arboriculture in several industry leadership positions including the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). Dr. Smiley is the author of many of the ISA's Best Management Practices publications. He lives in Washington state where he focuses on tree issues in the Pacific Northwest.