



## ***March 2025 Newsletter***

CLRSS acknowledges and appreciates that our virtual newsletter is being shared on the unceded territories of the following nations:

***Quw'utsun (Cow-ut-zun)***  
***Pauquachin (Pak-quw-chin)***  
***Ts'uubaa-asatx (Tsoo-bah-seht)***  
***Malahat (Malah-hat)***  
***Halalt (Ha-lalt)***  
***Penelakut (Pen-EL-ah-kut)***  
***Stz'uminus (Stuh-mee-nus)***  
***Lyackson (Lay-ik-sen)***  
***Ditidaht (Dee-tee-dot / Dee-tee-dat)***  
***Pacheedaht (Pah-chee-da / Pah-chee-dat)***

CLRSS will be emailing member newsletters every six weeks. Thanks to ongoing contributions from members: Judy Brayden (editor), Jacqueline Sherk, Genevieve Singleton, Jean Atkinson, Christoph Steeger, Maureen Quested and many others. Any questions, comments or feedback please see [Home | Cowichan Lake & River Stewardship Society British Columbia \(cowichan-lake-stewards.ca\)](https://www.cowichan-lake-stewards.ca)

*This meeting only -  
time change*

**Our next regular CLRSS Board meeting  
Thursday, April 3, 2025, at 6:00  
– IN PERSON  
Country Grocer Meeting Room in Lake  
Cowichan - Everyone welcome!**



***Come and join us for a very important discussion about the future of CLRSS. See the draft strategic plan and become part of a working team and help with lots of interesting projects and activities in the next three years.***

**In this Short Edition:**

- **Important Opportunity: Saturday, March 22, 2025 Weir Tour Event at Saywell Park, Lake Cowichan**
- **Yellow Flag Iris – A Cautionary Tale of Unintended Consequences – by Jacqueline Sherk and Judy Brayden**
- **What our Strategic plan looks like.**

# Walk the Weir



## World Water Day: FREE Tours

Sat, March 22 • Saywell Park, Lake Cowichan • Tours at 10am, 11am and 12:30pm

Meet us at the shelter. First come first served. Dress warm!

**Come on up!** Discover how this vital structure supports the environment, regulates water flow, and protects fish populations—and why it's in need of updates.

## Enjoy other activities:

- Have a hot tea
- Support the Stewardship Society. Join! Books, hoodies and hats for sale
- Learn about invasive plants
- More!

## Cohosted by:



Learn more: [cowichanlakeweir.ca](http://cowichanlakeweir.ca)

**Yellow Flag Iris – A Cautionary Tale of Unintended Consequences – by  
Jacqueline Sherk, diploma in Horticulture Technology and member of the  
Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Society (CLRSS) and Judy Brayden  
CLRSS President**

Photos from Internet



The exceedingly tall and striking yellow iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) much like a *genie* waiting to be unleashed from its bottle, it possesses a destructive force capable of disrupting entire ecosystems. You will recognize this iris by its size, colour and location in the landscape. Some growing taller than five feet, it has equally long, strappy leaves and large, yellow flowers. Introduced to North America from Europe, North Africa and the Middle East 200 years ago, it was initially admired for its beauty and ability to

thrive in water. However once freed, like a genie that cannot be forced back into its vessel, it has proven a formidable ecological disruptor.

The iris outcompetes native plants, dominating shorelines, marshes, ponds and irrigation ditches, even tolerating moderate salinity. Habitats that once thrived with sedges, rushes and cattails, nurseries for aquatic species and nesting grounds for birds, are now overrun, leaving them ecologically unproductive and posing significant challenges to conservation efforts.

Classified as a 'noxious' weed by the Invasive Species Council of BC, it threatens the economy by being toxic to livestock, such as cattle. Additionally, all parts of the plant can cause skin irritation, blistering and gastric distress in humans and animals if ingested.



The seeds are 5 - 10mm, flat, disc-like and reddish brown

Control is difficult. Yellow flag iris doesn't just grow *by* the water, it grows *in* the water. Even small fragments of its submerged rhizome will easily regenerate. Once it has gone to seed, whole new colonies will re-establish wherever its floating seeds might lodge. Seeds are 5 - 10mm, flat, disc-like and reddish brown.

Smaller outbreaks of this invader can be controlled manually by digging out plants and all rhizomes. Wearing gloves to avoid skin irritation, dispose properly by drying it thoroughly until shriveled, bagging it, and sending it to the landfill as noxious waste; never compost it. For larger infestations, cut stems below the waterline and use benthic tarps to suppress growth. These barrier fabrics fastened to the bottom of the water body, block light and reduce oxygen, making them more effective than cutting alone. However, they are expensive, disrupt benthic habitats critical for aquatic life, such as spawning fish, and can allow the plant to regrow along edges, through gaps, or after barrier removal. Though long-term tarping can deplete rhizomes of energy, it requires careful consideration due to its economic and ecological impact. In order to protect our water, the use of herbicides in or near water is strictly prohibited by the BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy.

If you are currently cultivating yellow flag iris and think that the genie can't escape into nature from your back yard, please consider that it can. Root fragments in your garden waste, or from landscaping activities, or even just the flow of rainwater can move viable parts of this plant into the natural ecosystem. Perhaps the best thing any individual can do is just *say no* to yellow flag iris: Don't buy it, don't take offerings from friends and neighbours, and if you already have it, take steps now to remove it. Our precious lakes, rivers and estuaries will thank you for it!



Diagram to Accompany CLRSS 2025 Strategic Plan

