



Discovering nature
in an urban setting

Description

UrbaNature takes you on an exploration of the city's natural world

By **Patricia Dumais**

Whether a park, some undeveloped land gone wild, or a patch of garden in our neighbourhood, green spaces provide a home for plants and animals in an urban setting. Nature is good for our minds and bodies: trees clean the air and provide shade, birds sing and lift the spirit, wildflowers are attractive and help bees, the colour green is soothing and de-stressing...



Lisa Mintz

Yet we often take all of this for granted despite the fact that green spaces are so important for the health of urban dwellers. [A recent Danish study](#) demonstrates the importance of keeping nature in our cities and our lives, stating that growing up near green space can reduce one's risk of mental illness by up to 55 percent.

Unfortunately we do not give the urban natural world the value it deserves. But **Lisa Mintz** wants to change this, through education and experience. She explains, "I grew up near nature and have gained a great appreciation of it. Those of us who have a strong bond with the natural world become very upset when natural places disappear, especially in an urban setting where there are so few of them. So the more you know about nature, the more you strive to protect it. With that in mind I decided to create [UrbaNature](#) with outdoor educator **Holly McIntyre**



. We serendipitously came together with similar goals and complementary experience and skill sets!”

Our diverse team can help groups, by way of custom-designed programs, connect with Nature – without leaving the city!

Lisa Mintz

A librarian, environmentalist and a certified Kundalini yoga teacher, Lisa is the founder of [Sauvons la falaise!](#) whose primary mission is to ensure protection of the St. Jacques Escarpment Eco-territory. She is a past board member of the NDG Community Council and present board member of the [Green Coalition](#) and [Les amis du parc Angrignon](#).



Holly McIntyre

An educator with nearly 20 years of experience in outdoor and experiential education, Holly McIntyre is a certified elementary teacher and has taught at all levels of education from preschool to CEGEP. She is also an outdoor instructor and trainer with the [Outdoor Council of Canada](#) and [Paddle Canada](#), and she teaches in the [Écoéducation par la nature](#) program through the Cegep de Rivière-du-Loup.

Founded one year ago, UrbaNature has since organized a number of events involving people of all ages, aiming to acquaint them with nature. Says Lisa, “We have had yoga in natural settings for children, such as Parc René-Levesque in Lachine, and nature discovery in Angrignon Park. We are looking into a New Horizons grant in view of creating a community garden in Montreal-West aimed at seniors. And we are working with SENA, the Iranian cultural centre, to get new Canadians involved. We want to spread the news about nature to everyone!”



UrbaNature offers a wide range of programs and services to encourage Nature connection. Its services include: nature-based programs for schools, day camps, senior's centres and community centres; professional development for teachers, administrators and staff who want to incorporate outdoor learning into their pedagogy; courses, certifications and training in outdoor leadership, canoeing/kayaking, wilderness first aid, and yoga; outdoor event and trip planning support; and custom workshops such as outdoor leadership, child-led nature play, outdoor skills, wellness, and outdoor learning in schools.

Says Lisa, "Our diverse team can help groups, by way of custom-designed programs, connect with Nature – without leaving the city!"

UrbaNature upcoming events





at 7 pm

Poets of Life: An Iranian Woman's Environmental Journey

Award-winning Iranian Documentary Film directed by Shirin Bargh-Navard.

An enlightening portrayal of the life of Shirin Parsi, environmentalist and social activist.

SEENA Cultural Centre, 6528 St-Jacques, Montreal

Hosted by UrbaNature and Sauvons la falaise

Free and open to all

Friday, March 22 from 9 am to 4 pm

Spring Equinox Ped Day Program

Wesley United Church, 5964 Notre-Dame-de-Grace, room 205, Montreal

A nature-based, multi-age ped day open to kids in grades 1-6.

\$ 40 per child

Tickets at [Eventbrite](#)

Saturday, March 30 from 5 pm to 9:30 pm

Visit the UrbaNature booth at Westmount's Earth Hour event

Victoria Hall, 4626 Sherbrooke W, Westmount

Free and open to all

For more information about UrbaNature's programs visit urbanature.org and the UrbaNature [Facebook page](#).

Images: courtesy of UrbaNature

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Patricia Dumais, co-editor and artistic director of WestmountMag.ca, is a long-time Westmount resident and nature enthusiast. Growing up near a wetland that was eventually developed, she recognizes the importance and benefits of conserving urban green spaces. pdumais@westmountmag.ca

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