

Self-Guided Nature Walk in Fauntleroy Park

This walk is an introduction to the many natural features of Fauntleroy Park. Hiking boots aren't necessary but a walking stick can come in handy. Points 1 - 6 have flat access. For your safety and that of the habitat, please stay on trail at all times.

The numbered points of interest start at the park entrance on S.W. Barton Street. To return there after Point 15, skirt the east side of the church parking lot and turn right into the alley; it becomes the trail back to where you started.

- 1 City meets nature** *(As you enter)*
Sights, sounds, and plants tell you that the city is close by. When English ivy and other invasive species migrate from nearby yards, they threaten habitat-friendly natives. In the open area to your left, native seedlings planted and maintained by students will grow to shade out invaders. Throughout the park, volunteers put in many hours to keep weeds at bay.
- 2 Nurse log** *(Left at the T, then a few feet ahead on your right)* Fell wood, such as this uprooted trunk, is home for the bugs and bacteria that recycle nutrients back into the soil and nourish new generations. It also "nurses" a variety of plant life, including mosses and fungi.
- 3 Early bloomers** *(Along the trail)* The delicate white flowers of Indian plum start the show in March. Salmonberry is close behind with hot-pink blooms.

By April, trillium dots the forest floor with three-petal white blossoms backed by three leaves. *(To see trillium without going off trail, look several yards uphill beyond Point 7.)* By early May, the buttercup-like gold flowers of large-leaved avens border the trail.

- 4 Main channel** *(At the big bridge)*
Water from springs and runoff feeds the creek year-round. Most student-raised coho spend their first year in the upper creek. Logs added to supplement wood that falls naturally in the channel create pools for juvenile salmon and habitat for the aquatic bugs they eat.

Habitat Stewardship

Help protect natural habitat by respecting laws and using common sense when visiting the park and beach:

- Stay on established trails; blazing your own path damages plants, causes erosion, and encourages others to do the same.
- Walk your bike through the park to prevent erosion and keep other visitors safe.
- Pack out any trash you create.
- Admire plants and seashells but leave them where you find them.
- Keep your dog on leash and out of the water.
- Reduce harmful bacteria in the creek and Puget Sound by always bagging and properly disposing of pet waste.

- 5 Wetland plants** *(Along the boardwalk)*
Rain and runoff sustain many wet-loving plants here. After the brilliant yellow hoods of skunk cabbage die back in the spring, its leaves can grow to as long as 3 feet in the mud. Water parsley looks like the garden variety only larger; its roots have a firm grasp on the soil.
- 6 Snag** *(End of boardwalk)* Standing dead trees like the one just beyond this platform provide habitat for birds that nest in cavities and feed on bugs in the soft wood. Look for the orange trumpets of Western honeysuckle here in May. The "wetland" stone marks one of three water-related habitats in the park.
- 7 Trees.** *(Back to the bridge, then a few yards up to the platform on your left)*
Seasonal trees visible from here include bigleaf maple (broad leaves and winged seeds) and red alder (small leaves and clusters of small cones). Evergreen trees include the Western hemlock behind you, with its drooping branches and soft needles.
- 8 Ferns.** *(Back a few feet to the trail on your left)* Notice the erosion-fighting ferns on both sides of the trail. Sword fern has green fronds throughout the year; fronds of the delicate lady fern die back in winter. Birds forage in their dry fronds for spiders and other bugs.

9 Sometimes pond. (*Ahead along the boardwalk*) When water pools here, it creates the closest thing to a pond that you'll see on your walk. Silt from erosion of fine soils provides habitat for microscopic organisms but it can also smother salmon eggs. Logs added to the creek throughout the park and downstream through city/community partnerships trap silt and improve habitat for juvenile salmon and other water life.

10 Glade. (*Several yards ahead*) The mix of mature, young, and rotting trees in this clearing demonstrates the natural forest lifecycle. Gray-barked Douglas fir branches high in the canopy, while Western red cedar, branches all along its shaggy, reddish trunk. Small vine maple trees spot the park with color in the fall.

11 Overlook. (*Down the slope, over the bridge, and up the stairs to your right*) At the crest of the bluff, enjoy the view across the ravine and listen to the birds. Evergreen natives at your feet include salal (shiny leaves, bellflowers, and purple berries) and Oregon grape (prickly leaves, yellow flowers, and grape-like purple berries).

12 Berries. (*Along the trail*) Birds count on berries and other fruit in the ecosystem to ripen over many months. Look along here in late summer for red huckleberry, an airy bush that favors shade and decaying wood.

13 Slope. (*Right at the fork, then down the hill*) The trail in this steep area was designed with public safety and erosion control in mind. Take a close look at the various tree barks and the habitat they provide for both animals and plants.

14 Tributary. (*At the bridge*) The chemistry of tributaries such as this one affects habitat here and downstream. Data from student and volunteer monitoring of water quality and aquatic

life help focus advice to watershed residents about creek-friendly gardening practices.

15 Fenton Glen. (*Past the church sanctuary, then right at the glen sign*) While most plants in this quiet garden are ornamental, you'll see natives blending in here as well. Note the red-osier dogwood at the water's edge, where it shades the creek and helps hold the soil.

