

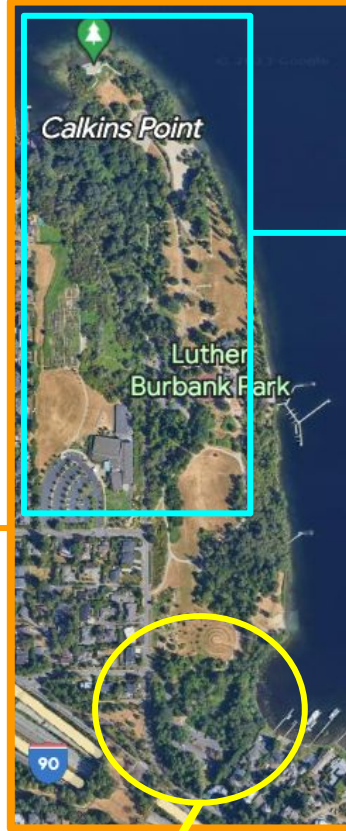
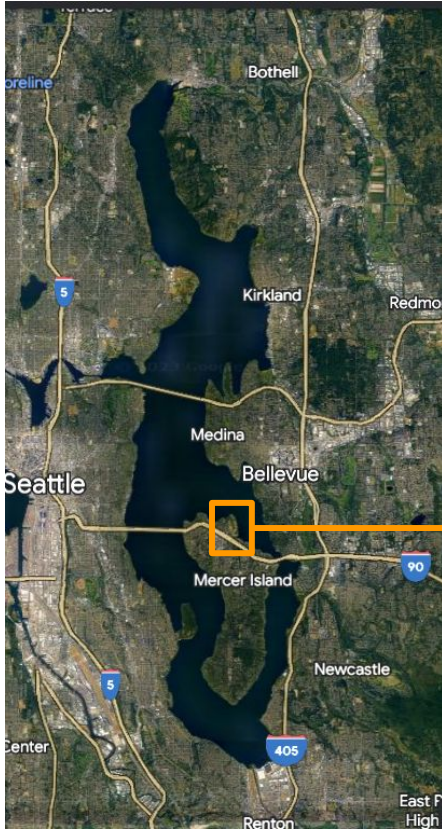
Interpretive Signage At Luther Burbank Park

Charlie Weiss Sharman



Location and History

North Wetland: Category II
Diverse vegetation and close to
polluting sources



South Wetland
(Christie worked here)



1880s

Clearing and
agriculture

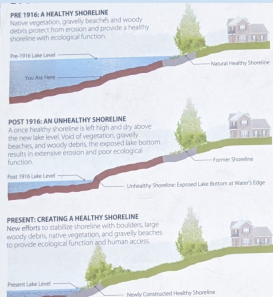


-1943

Boys' school

1916

Lake WA drained



1969

King County
purchases, manages
historical buildings



2002

City of Mercer
Island takes over,
restores wetlands
and focuses on
recreation



Why signage?

Technology is innovative, but distracting

Signs can go beyond dry facts

- Encourage exploration
- Ask questions
- Ground in nature



Values and Principles

Values

Luther Burbank Master Plan

- Embrace natural systems
- Maintain the character
- Manage vegetation
- Improve park infrastructure
- Improve the arrival

From Tilden's Six Principles (National Park Service)

- Relate the wetland to the personality or experience of the visitor
- Aim not to instruct, but to provoke
- Present the wetland as a whole, rather than a part



The Signs

these are conceptual

Himalayan Blackberry

Too much of a good thing?

Luther Burbank Park is named after a man named Luther Burbank, a horticulturist who created a plant we see everywhere in Western Washington: Himalayan Blackberry. Many of us have stopped on the road to feast on the tasty fruit, but it also causes problems. It grows a little too well around here, choking out all the other plants. Without constant work to keep it under control, it could be the only berry left!

Can you see it here?

Himalayan blackberry can grow just about everywhere. It grows in both dry or wet soils, in shade or in full sunlight. It also reproduces in many ways, including by seeds in the berries (which spread when animals eat them, including us) and by rooting wherever it touches the ground.

Where do you see it growing?
Does the ground look wet or dry?
Can you see where it has roots?
Is it overtaking other plants?

Keep an eye out

Look around wherever you go. You may begin to see Himalayan blackberry growing all over the place. Ask yourself: How many types of plants do you think grew there before it took over?

Theme: “Luther Burbank Park is named after the famous horticulturist [Luther Burbank]... [He] created the Himalaya[n] blackberry- loved by some for its luscious fruit, despised by others for its invasiveness. Ironically, many of Luther Burbank Park’s native vegetation are choked with Himalaya[n] blackberry bushes” (from City of Mercer Island website)

Justification:

- Embrace natural systems
- Manage vegetation
- Relate to experience of visitor
- Provokes (Asks questions, encourages activity)

There's so much more to try!

These native plants bring more variety to the ecosystem, and they can be tasty too!
As with all things, not everyone will like all of them, but it's worth a try.
If nothing else, they can make an interesting jam!

Make sure you know what it is before you eat it!
Some berries are dangerous, like snowberry.



Salmonberry
Rubus spectabilis
Taste: sweet and tart (like raspberries)



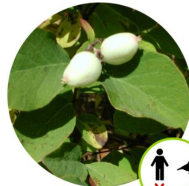
Salal
Gaultheria shallon
Taste: Juicy, sweet, and earthy



Red Huckleberry
Vaccinium parviflorum
Taste: tart and sweet



Thimbleberry
Rubus parviflorus
Taste: soft, sweet-tart, intense



Snowberry
Symphoricarpos albus
Taste: Don't eat!



How to look at a plant

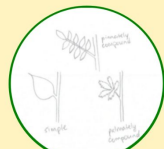
Plants grow in many different ways, but there are some patterns.
Looking at these characteristics can get you started on noticing what makes a plant unique, and then figuring out what it is. Look around you for real life examples!



leaf arrangement



leaf shape



leaf type



leaf arrangement



flowers or cones



leaf shape



bark or stem characteristics



leaf type



other characteristics



flowers or cones



bark or stem characteristics



other characteristics

Theme: Plants are very unique. With some basic skills, anyone can learn how to tell them apart and appreciate their individuality. Its okay if you don't know what a plant is- the fun is in noticing its unique qualities.

Justification

- Embraces natural systems
- Relates to experience of visitor
- Provokes
- Physical interaction

It's OK if you don't know which plant it is.
The fun is in noticing what makes it unique!



leaf arrangement



flowers or cones



leaf shape



bark or stem characteristics



leaf type



other characteristics



How to look at a plant

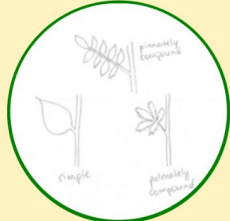
Plants grow in many different ways, but there are some patterns.
Looking at these characteristics can get you started on noticing what makes a plant unique, and then figuring out what it is. Look around you for real life examples!



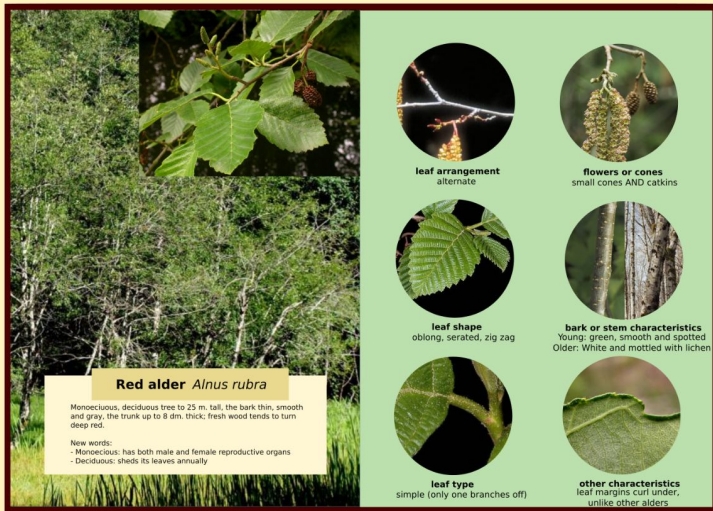
leaf arrangement



leaf shape



leaf type



It's OK if you don't know which plant it is.
The fun is in noticing what makes it unique!



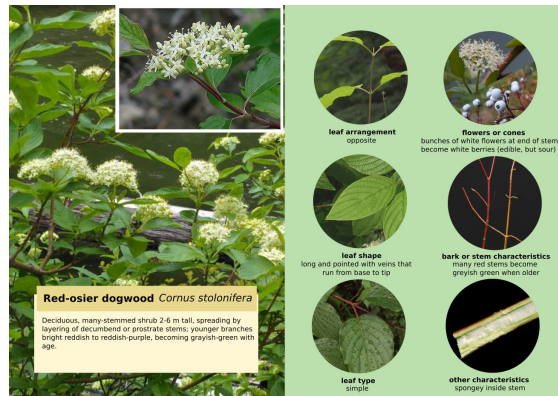
flowers or cones



bark or stem characteristics



other characteristics



What can a wetland do?

This wetland provides for us, regulates biogeochemical processes, and is part of our culture.

Theme: The wetlands at Luther Burbank Park are some of many in a much larger watershed. Wetlands in the watershed provide for us and animals, regulate biogeochemical processes, and are part of our culture.

Wetlands keep our water clean

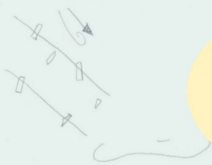
Wetlands like this one remove toxic chemicals the water that flows through them. This happens for many reasons:

Water in wetlands slows down, which gives time for sediments and chemicals to drop out of the water to the bottom.

Plants uptake minerals and hold onto them when they die and are buried.

Microorganisms regulate nitrogen and carbon cycles.

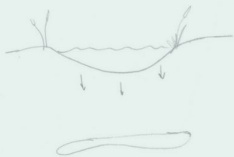
If **soil** is permeable enough, water can even flow down through the ground, losing sediments along the way, until they accumulate into clean aquifers where we get our **drinking water**.



Water flows down hills, picking things up along the way.

What do you see on the ground here or in your neighborhood that might end up in a wetland?

Where might it go if the wetland wasn't there?



Wetlands keep animals alive

Wetlands are necessary habitat for animals such as beavers, fish, ducks, and many plants. They are complex habitats that increase biodiversity in the world by providing for animals (many endangered) that rely on wetlands specifically.



Without biodiversity, there is less opportunity for new life to evolve that could help us discover new medicines, or simply enjoy new beauty.



Beavers are crepuscular, which means they like to come out at dawn and dusk. Go to wetlands during those times to see them!

Wetlands give us stories to tell

Did you see anything interesting today?



The Beauty of a Wetland

Take a deep breath

Did you smell anything?
Flowers? Wet mud? Sulfur?

Close your eyes and listen

What did you hear?

Birds singing?
Animals moving?
Water flowing?

Look at something small

Pick a leaf, flower, stick, or bug
and study it closely
for a little while

Look at the whole scene

This wetland is a complex
ecosystem with many types
of plants and wet habitats.
See what you can notice.

Imagine this place in another season

How would it feel?
Would there be different animals?
What would the plants look like?
Would it smell different?

Find something you like

The smell of a flower, a
beaver footprint, anything.
Share it with someone.

Thank you

There's a lot to notice in a
wetland if you stay for awhile.
Thank you for
taking your time.

Theme: Wetland aesthetics can vary greatly throughout the seasons, from winter twigs to beautiful blooming flowers. They can be both active and serene, noticeable with all the senses.

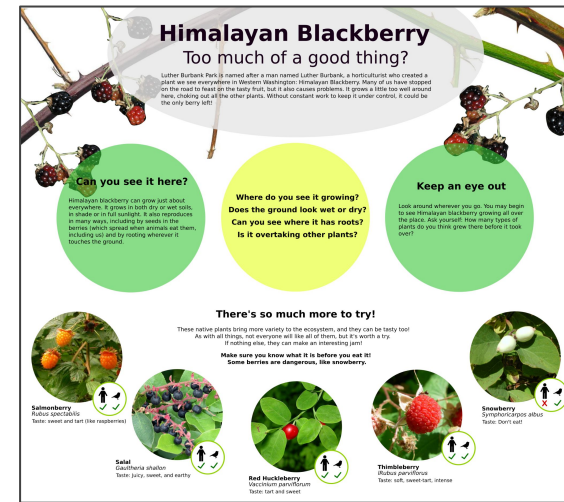
Justification:

- Embrace natural systems
- Relate to experience of visitor
- Provokes (shows viewer how to use all their senses to appreciate wetland)

Future Work

Feedback and collaboration - a critical (missing) step

- Local government/groups
 - Constraints from the city/other bodies
 - Relationships with Tribes for native botanical history
- User research
 - Currently making a lot of assumptions
 - Testing and feedback
 - Need opinions from people who aren't scientists
- Professional sign makers
 - Wording
 - Art
 - Other tips



Questions/Comments?

Image Sources

— — —

Cow picture: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cattle>

Lbp map: [https://your.kingcounty.gov/GIS/web/Web/VMC/recreation/LB 2005 tabloid 300.pdf](https://your.kingcounty.gov/GIS/web/Web/VMC/recreation/LB_2005_tabloid_300.pdf)

Montlake cut: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montlake Cut](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montlake_Cut)

Historical buildings: <http://mercerislandhistory.org/historic.html>

Stock photos:

<https://www.dreamstime.com/photos-images/taking-white-flower-mobile-smart-phone-nature.html>

Icons: thenounproject.com