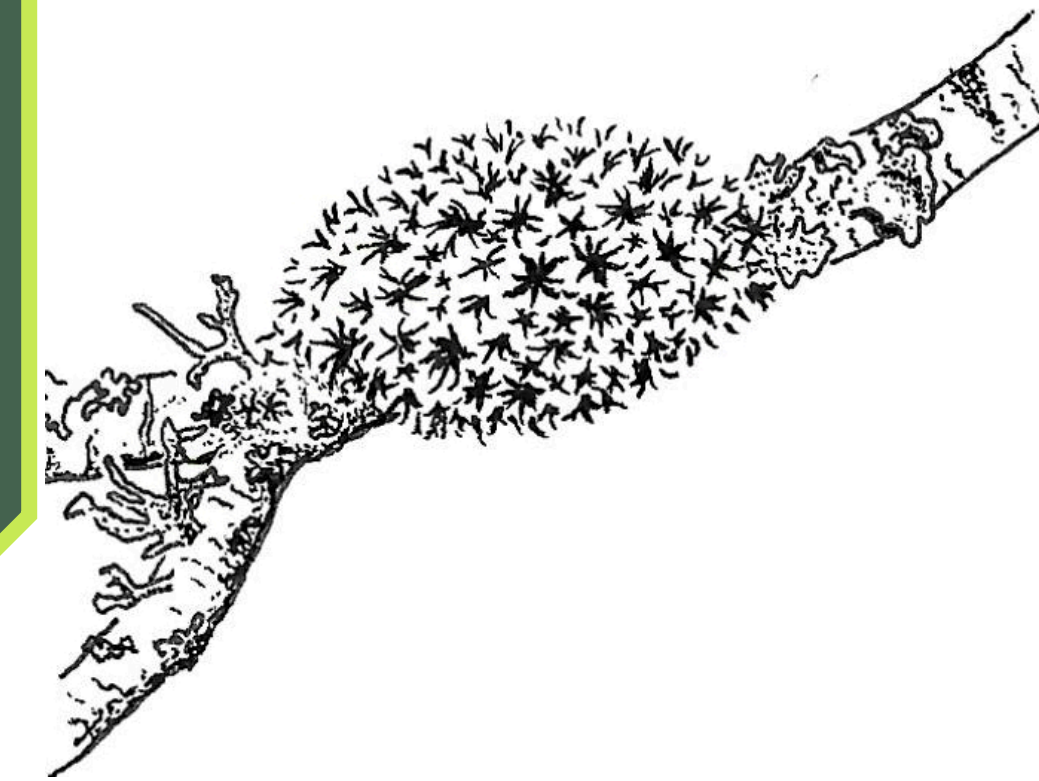


# THE PACIFIC CONNECTIONS GARDEN AT WASHINGTON PARK ARBORETUM: URBAN ECOLOGY FIELD GUIDE

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## FRAMING

### ECOLOGICAL RIFT

Cities are ecologically important and complex places, with many species and relationships that adapt and thrive to urban conditions. Their residents, however, often perceive nature as something that only exists in pristine, faraway locations.

### ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

When people feel connected to the nature around them, they are better equipped to approach issues of conservation and sustainability. To cultivate this, environmental education emphasizes curiosity and active engagement with local nature.

Much of the body of environmental education material and programming is targeted toward children, but a growing body of work focuses on environmental education for adults.

### WASHINGTON PARK ARBORETUM

Extensive & historic gardens and grounds, with relatively little interpretation—staff are committed to changing this and creating programming and materials that more actively make visitors feel welcome.

## PURPOSE

With this guide, I use **environmental education best practices** to encourage people to connect with and see the value of urban ecology. The guide is aimed at **adult visitors** with a wide range of ecological/horticultural knowledge and experience, and with the goal of fostering **curiosity** about and **connection** with the garden and with urban ecology in general.

## PROCESS

### RESEARCH

Met with Arboretum staff and consulted 2023 Community Survey to gain insight into **institution priorities and visitor perspectives**. These revealed an overarching disconnect between the Arboretum and the rest of the city, as well as particular content areas people ask about

Researched Seattle ecology and ecology of each source region to choose species

Regularly visited the garden throughout the project, observing change & activity

### WRITING & DESIGN

Compiled information into a **web of connected species & entries** emphasizing relationships with other organisms

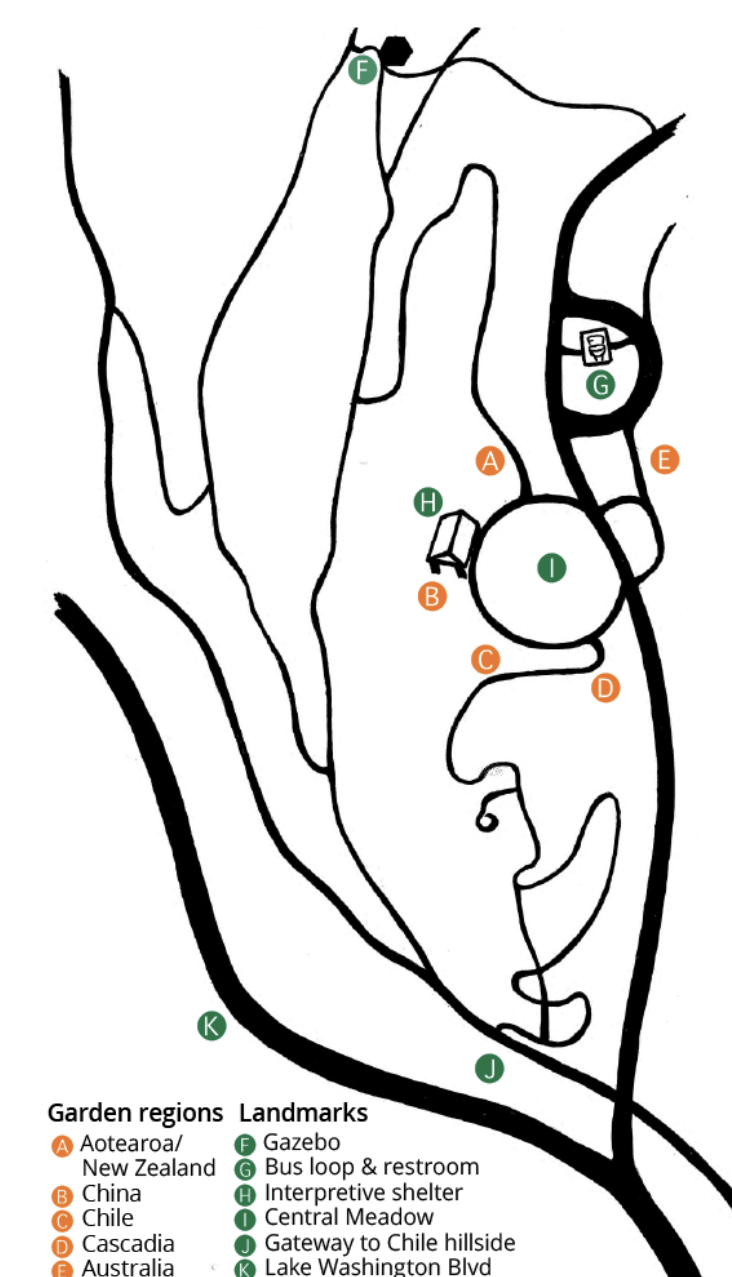
Wrote entries drawing on environmental education practice, **prompting readers to investigate & engage**

Sketched close-up images for each entry, learning to use **illustration as an interpretive tool**.

### TESTING & REVISION

Gathered a group of 6 classmates and friends to test out the guide on location and give feedback in an informal focus group format.

Based on feedback, incorporated tools like a trail map and seasonality/phenology key to make the guide easier to use on the go



## DELIVERABLE

Print and mobile versions of the guide will be available for free to all Arboretum visitors in Graham Visitor Center and the Pacific Connections Garden Interpretive Shelter and on the Arboretum website.

## CONCLUSIONS

This guide serves not only to add needed interpretive materials to the Arboretum, but also to connect the Arboretum with the rest of the city. It is also part of a growing body of work celebrating urban ecology in general and Seattle ecology in particular, encouraging adults to notice and appreciate their local nature.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to Meena Selvakumar, Cindy Thomashow and the environmental education scholars and practitioners who have taught me, and Olivia Price and many others at the Arboretum. Thank you also to my friends and classmates who tested out my draft and gave me such imaginative and thoughtful feedback, and all my other loved ones who have supported me.

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