

Abstract

2021 Nature Area and Rita Steiner Frye Nature Trail Interpretive Plan

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With missions focused on public education, public gardens are beginning to follow in the footsteps of other informal learning institutions when it comes to interpretation. They often focus on utilizing interpretation methods to teach visitors about climate change, biodiversity, and other environmental topics. The purpose of this project was to create an interpretive plan for the Nature Area and Rita Steiner Frye Nature Trail (RSFN Trail) at Deepwood Museum & Gardens, located in Salem, Oregon. With an interpretive plan to help set up goals and objectives, the RSFN Trail could be a source of outdoor education while creating meaningful engagement opportunities with visitors. The three target audiences this plan focused on included the residents of Salem, families (especially those with young children), and senior visitors. The specific deliverable for this project was an interpretive plan for the Nature Area and RSFN Trail, in the form of a PDF document. The process for this project involved research, working with the host site, exploring the trail, and meeting with committee members to develop a useful plan for the institution. The plan was created to guide the museum for the next three years, and the Further

Actions section has a list of actions for the museum to focus on as it begins to develop more interpretation for the Nature Area and RSFN Trail.

Key Words: Interpretation, Interpretive Plan, Outdoor Education, Public Gardens, Visitor Engagement



2021 Nature Area and
Rita Steiner Fry Nature
Trail Interpretive Plan

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Introduction and Purpose of Plan

“Deepwood is a Victorian historic house designed in the Queen Anne style situated in a five acre public park with formal gardens, nature trails, greenhouse, and original carriage house.”

-Deepwood Museum & Gardens Homepage

The 2021 Nature Area and Rita Steiner Fry Nature Trail Interpretive Plan was developed as a resource for Deepwood Museum & Gardens (Deepwood) to communicate new messages, stories, information, and experiences to visitors to the estate in Salem, Oregon. Deepwood is a public park owned by the City of Salem and managed by the Friends of Deepwood. The Friends of Deepwood was established in 1974 with the mission to preserve the historic integrity of the home and gardens as a living museum for public education and enjoyment. The Friends of Deepwood is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that operates and cares for Deepwood Museum & Gardens.^[1] The grounds include the Deepwood historic home museum and Carriage House, built in 1894, eight landscaped gardens, and other structures such as the Lewis and Clark Gazebo, original spring house gazebo, and the William S. Walton Greenhouse.

This interpretive plan is specifically for the Nature Area and Rita Steiner Fry Nature Trail (RSFN Trail).^[2] The Nature Area and accompanying trail were created by Alice Brown Powell (who owned the home from 1925-1971) and is named after Rita Steiner Fry (childhood friend of Alice Bingham who grew up in the Deepwood home). The trail connects Deepwood Museum & Gardens to Pringle Creek, which separates Deepwood from Bush Pasture Park.

[1] Yvonne Putze, “Friends of Deepwood Strategic Plan 2021-2024 (Working copy for implementation in 2021) Deepwood Museum & Gardens,” November 1, 2020.

[2] See attached map on page 17.

In the past, this area has had minimal interpretative planning. There are over forty native plants within this area, and there have been efforts in the past to make it an educational resource for those looking to learn more about native plants and as a green space for those wishing to explore. Because the area is more natural and “wilder” compared to the formal gardens, it has failed to have the level of consistent volunteer commitment or focus required to keep the invasive species managed and trails consistently cleared. This lack of management has made it difficult to incorporate more interpretation in the area. The current lack of interpretative materials and inconsistent focus on maintenance for the area means it is underutilized in its potential for visitor engagement.

The purpose of this document is to define the Nature Area’s interpretive goals, future upkeep, and accessibility, for the next three years. This interpretive plan will work in tandem with the 2021-2024 Deepwood Strategic Plan as well as other interpretive efforts seen throughout the other gardens and museum home. This plan will also reference the Cultural Landscape Development Plan currently being developed by the City of Salem for Bush’s Pasture Park and Deepwood Museum & Gardens.^[3]

These plans seek to bring together comprehensive interpretation and maintenance for both Bush Pasture Park and Deepwood guided by visitor input. Incorporating the City’s plan will help create a more cohesive interpretive strategy for the parks of Salem.



[3] “Cultural Landscape Management Plan for Bush Park and Deepwood Gardens,” City of Salem, August 17, 2020, <https://www.cityofsalem.net/Pages/cultural-landscape-management-plan-for-bush-park-and-deepwood-gardens.aspx>

Overall Interpretive Plan Goals

- Continued preservation of a historic asset of Salem
- Increased accessibility for multiple audiences
- Increased engagement with multiple audiences
- Utilization as a natural educational resource

Ownership

To help achieve the stated goals, the idea of community ownership of the Nature Area and RSFN Trail will be encouraged through various interpretive efforts. By encouraging a sense of responsibility, visitors will feel more attached to the Nature Area and RSFN Trail and be invested in the preservation of the area, feel welcome with more accessible trails, be more engaged with the area, and utilize the area as a natural educational resource.



Deepwood serves the diverse Salem community and the Friends of Deepwood want to encourage the residents of Salem to have a sense of ownership of this area. This means that they feel welcome visiting and walking along the trails with friends, family, or alone. This also means that they feel a sense of responsibility for the trails and are invested in the upkeep of the area. Immersive experiences, such as walking through nature, can help visitors develop environmentally positive feelings and behaviors, which in turn leads

them to being more receptive to interpretive efforts.^[4] More interpretation for the RSFN Trail, such as signage that teaches about the owners of the home or about local native plants, will help foster a connection between visitors and the Nature Area. Educational and interpretive efforts will center on native plants in the area, teaching visitors to identify certain species and foster a connection to their local environment. Research shows that environmental education can positively impact how a person sees themselves in relation to surrounding green spaces.^[5] The phrase used by the Executive Director of the Friends of Deepwood to describe the grounds of Deepwood was “Salem’s living room” which invokes communal ownership of the area and an ability to provide relaxing and educational opportunities for every visitor.^[6] This is a place for everyone in Salem to enjoy, from families wanting to go on a nature walk to individuals wishing to learn more about Salem’s history in an outdoor setting.

Related to the idea of ownership, The Friends of Deepwood would like to see an established volunteer organization looking for a service project to help with the upkeep of the area on a long-term basis. The vision is to have a single group who will take responsibility of the area to keep it clean, maintain paths in terms of bedding needs, and minimize the number of invasive species. Please refer to the Further Actions section for details.

[4] Lisa Pennisi, Qwynne Lackey, and Stephen M. Holland, "Can an Immersion Exhibit Inspire Connection to Nature and Environmentally Responsible Behavior?" *Journal of Interpretation Research* 22, no. 2 (2017), 35 https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A567549727/AONE?u=wash_main&sid=AONE&xid=ef6c49e1.

[5] Judith Chen-Hsuan Cheng and Martha C. Monroe, "Connection to Nature: Children’s Affective Attitude Towards Nature," *Environment and Behavior* 44, no. 1 (2012): 31-49. <https://journals-sagepub-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/doi/10.1177/0013916510385082>.

[6] Yvonne Putze (Executive Director) in discussion with the author, February 2021.

Stakeholders and Target Audiences

The primary stakeholders for the Nature Area and RSFN Trail include the Friends of Deepwood staff, volunteers and Board Members, and the City of Salem (primarily the Parks Department).

While Deepwood serves many audiences and visitors, there are three key audiences the Friends of Deepwood wish to focus on and cultivate stronger relationships with:

1. Residents of Salem
2. Families (especially those with young children)
3. Senior visitors

Local residents of Salem will be encouraged to become repeat visitors through new interpretive materials and online resources.^[7] The Nature Area and RSFN Trail, as well as the formal gardens, change with the seasons and interpretation will teach residents which plants can be seen and when, especially in spring and summer. Activities from the museum home will tie in with the Nature Area and RSFN Trail, urging people to further explore the outside area. Information found on the welcome sign at the beginning of the trail will teach visitors about Deepwood's history, encouraging them to tour the museum home. Through the use of interpretive materials (such as signs, brochures, and guided tours), residents of Salem will learn more about the area's history and build connections with the Nature Area and RSFN Trail. The main goal for this audience is repeat visits through the use of more engaging interpretation and by providing a relaxing green space with educational opportunities.

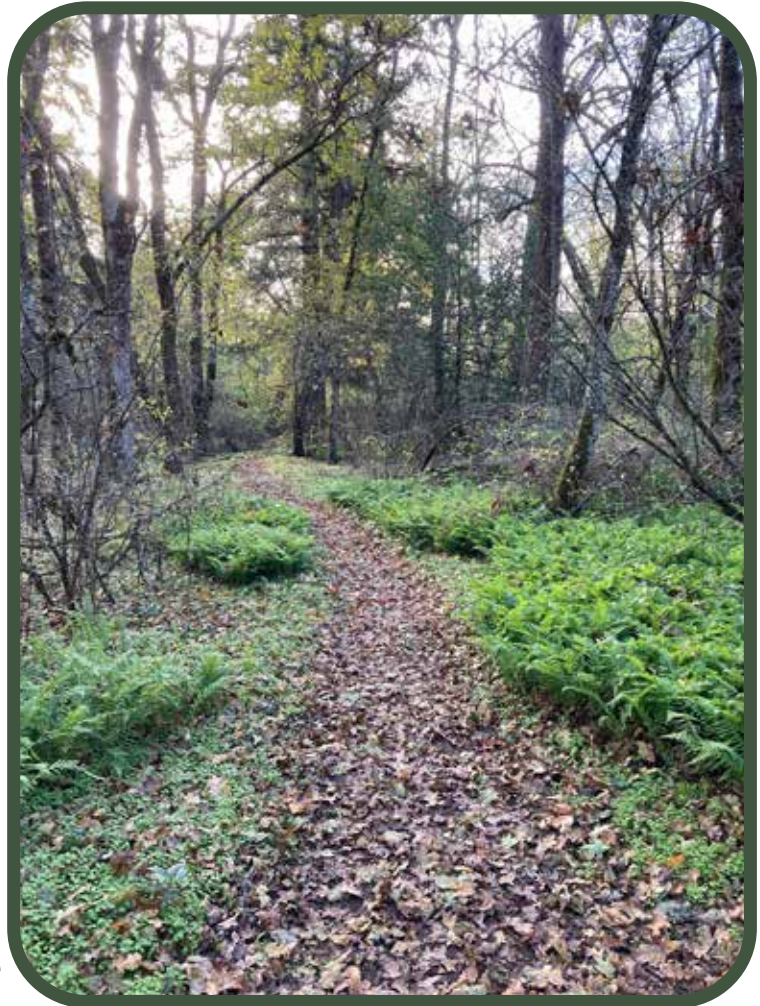
Families are another target audience that the Friends of Deepwood wish to cultivate. Part of Deepwood's mission is to preserve the grounds for the education and enjoyment of future generations.^[8] Providing engaging educational opportunities for both adults and children will fulfill this aspect of the mission. The two yearly children-centered events (Easter Eggstravaganza and Halloween Party) will help build lasting relationships with this audience. Studies show that early elementary trips to museums create lasting memories for children that positively influence future

[7] The current estimated population of Salem as of July 1, 2019 is 174,365 residents according to the U.S. Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/salemcityoregon,US/PST045219>

[8] Yvonne Putze, "Friends of Deepwood Strategic Plan 2021-2024 (Working copy for implementation in 2021) Deepwood Museum & Gardens," November 1, 2020.

museum attendance.^[9] Therefore, it is important for historic sites to engage with younger audiences and build interest in the site through interpretation. One of the main goals for this audience is that children will retain interest in the area as they grow up and will eventually bring their children here, ensuring the museum's continued support and relevance for generations to come.

The last target audience includes the local senior residents of Salem. Consistent with other historical attractions, seniors are frequent visitors and supporters of Deepwood.^[10] In following the idea of ownership, all visitors should feel comfortable and be physically able to navigate at least a portion of the Nature Area and RSFN Trail. As seniors often have more challenges to mobility, making them feel secure in accessing the trail is key to ensuring that they feel connected to the area. For this audience, there will be one main trail accessible for those with mobility issues, which will be discussed more in the Further Actions section. The Friends of Deepwood Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 outlines six core values, one of which being knowledge and lifelong learning. By making sure the Nature Area and RSFN Trail are not only accessible, but provide educational opportunities, senior visitors can enjoy a green space while learning more about a historic part of Salem. The main goal for this group is that they are able to physically access the Nature Area and RSFN Trail, and accompanying interpretive materials.



[9] Graham Black, *The Engaging Museum: Developing Museums for Visitor Involvement*, (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2005).

[10] Yvonne Putze, "Friends of Deepwood Strategic Plan 2021-2024 (Working copy for implementation in 2021) Deepwood Museum & Gardens," November 1, 2020.

Trail

The RSFN Trail is about $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile long and makes a loop around the Nature Area, with a few smaller, less defined trails that branch off from the main trail. Each trail will be more defined through clear signage to improve accessibility and ensure easy navigation for visitors. At the beginning of the RSFN Trail, there will be one large introductory sign that shows the map of the area and contains information about the history of the estate, native and invasive plant information, information about the Kalapuya peoples, and a timeline of Deepwood. On the main map, there will be callouts to where the plant identification signs can be found. There will be a QR code on the sign that will direct visitors to more information about the estate, should they choose to scan the code. The map featured in this plan and on the example sign is currently the only map of the area available, so another action to consider before making this welcome sign is creating a new map of the area.

Along the trails, there are ten plant identification posts already in place. They are sturdy but old and difficult to read, with some having lost their signs. These can be utilized and updated to identify native plants along the trails that will then be referenced in other interpretive materials (maps, brochures, etc.).

Example

This is a rough mock up of what the introductory welcome sign could look like. It is currently 4' x 4' but that can be adjusted. Sections may be edited or changed to better reflect what Deepwood wishes to convey to the visitor.

Welcome to the Rita Steiner Frye Nature Trail

Who Created This Trail?

The Nature Area and accompanying trail was created by Alice Brown Powell, who owned the home from 1925-1971. She created the area for her own pleasure, and would often walk along the path to get away and enjoy nature. The trail is named after Rita Steiner Frye, who was a childhood friend of Alice Bingham, who grew up in the Deepwood home. The trail was named as a memorial for Alice's childhood friend. The trail connects the grounds to Pringle Creek, which separates Deepwood from Bush Pasture Park.

There are three side trails that can be identified on the map. They are all short and lead back to the main trail. The three trails are named after the three families who have owned Deepwood over the years: the Port Family, the Bingham Family, and the Brown Family.

While You're Here

We welcome you to explore the nature and history along this trail. This 1/4 mile loop will return you to this sign. There are over forty native plants to be found in the area, and on the map we have pointed out where you can find some of them along with their identification markers. For birdwatchers, there are a number of birds that can be found in the trees or along Pringle Creek. We invite you to enjoy the plants and animals that can be found here. We also ask for you to please stay on the trails and not disturb any plants you may find so everyone can enjoy them.

Who Were the First People Here?

This area is part of the traditional lands of the Kalapuya people, who have lived in the Willamette valley for over 14,000 years. They cultivated the area by practicing a form of land management where they set fire to the valley. This cleared excess vegetation, renewed food plants, and returned nutrients to the soil. Over the past 200 years, they have dealt with many changes to their traditional life-ways. During the 1850s, they were removed from their lands onto reservations around Oregon. Today, the Kalapuyan descendants are contributors of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon as they continue to steward the land.

What Are Invasive Species?

An invasive species is an organism that does not originate from an area and are usually introduced. They will cause harm to the native species already in the area. When an invasive plant is introduced, the ecosystem can be disrupted as native plants are displaced. This creates a chain event that can negatively affect all species within an ecosystem. Deepwood volunteers work hard to keep invasive plants in check so native plants can thrive, but they can be difficult to fully eradicate. Some invasive species to watch out for are English Ivy, Himalayan Blackberry, Shiny Crinoid, and Cleavers.



Want to learn more about Deepwood? Scan here!



Further Actions

City Planning:

- The City of Salem is currently working on a Cultural Landscape Management Plan for Bush's Pasture Park and Deepwood Museum & Gardens.
- There have been two surveys on how residents use the areas and how they would respond to some recommended changes or plans.
 - From survey one, common responses to the question "One thing I would WANT to see change" at Deepwood included better signage, a better trail connection to Bush Park, and restoration of the RSFN Trail.
 - Other responses commented on wanting to preserve the camas, white oaks, and wildflowers in the areas.^[11]
- The second survey asked residents how they felt about some proposed recommendations as well as other things they want to see done in the area.
 - 81% of respondents were supportive of "Rehabilitate Rita Steiner Fry Nature Trail on east side of creek" and "Remove invasive vegetation".^[12]
 - Other comments specifically about Deepwood mentioned wanting more interpretation and wanting to promote plant and garden preservation and resiliency.^[13]
 - While this project is ongoing, it is important to keep the City's plans in mind for future interpretation as well as see relevant feedback from visitors.

[11] "Bush's Pasture Park and Deepwood Gardens: Virtual Open House 1 Summary," City of Salem, August 31, 2020, <https://www.cityofsalem.net/CityDocuments/bushs-park-cultural-landscape-management-plan-survey-1-summary.pdf>.

[12] "Bush's Pasture Park and Deepwood Estate Gardens: Cultural Landscape Management Plan Virtual Open House 2," City of Salem, December 7-22, 2020, <https://www.cityofsalem.net/CityDocuments/Cultural-Landscape-Management-Plan-Survey-2-Full-Report.pdf>

[13] Ibid.

Accessibility:

- Make the trails more accessible to those with limited mobility and wheelchair users, while ensuring that interpretive signage is visible for both those walking or in a wheelchair.
- The trail will be designated accessible for people with low mobility and for wheelchair users through on-site signage and via the website. This designation shows that the museum wants to extend ownership to all residents, especially older residents who may have trouble navigating other green spaces around the city.
- Deepwood can partner with Center 50+, which is non-membership community center providing programs and services to adults age 50 and older, in order to assess the accessibility of one of the trails.^[14]
- After recommendations are provided, changes can be made to ensure the designated trail is accessible for those with limited mobility and wheelchair users.

Plant Sale:

- Every March there is a plant sale where native and companion plants are sold, including some difficult to find species. There are guided tours of the nature trail throughout both days where visitors can learn more about the Nature Area and about native Oregon plants.
- Having interpretive signage on the trails can help enhance the guided tours, while providing more information for visitors who wish to have self-guided tours. The welcome sign will also have connections back to the museum home, teaching visitors about the history of the area as well.
- There could be a map or brochure that details the importance of Native plants and how to create native plant gardens, or showing the benefits of those plants to the local ecosystem and environment.



[14] "Seniors & Center 50+," City of Salem, <https://www.cityofsalem.net/seniors>.

- A potential activity could include a scavenger hunt-like map for kids to identify native plants along the trails.
- For this event and others, there is the possibility of having painted rocks along the trails as a small token that kids and adults alike could pick up and take home in remembrance of the day they had at Deepwood.

Marketing to Families:

- The two main children's events that take place every year are the Easter Eggstravaganza and the Halloween Party.^[15] At each event, there are a number of themed activities aimed at toddlers through age ten.^[16]
 - Since these are targeted at such a young age group, interpretation that incorporates native plants can be through more hands-on methods that are facilitated by volunteers or teachable to the adults that accompany the children.
- Because these are both very popular events, it is advised that some forms of interpretation/engagement, such as a native plant scavenger hunt maps, are given to families at the end of an event to encourage them to visit the Nature Area and RSFN Trail another time.
 - This will protect the plants in the area from potentially being damaged or disturbed by large numbers of young children and prevent congestion along the trail during these events.
- Any crafts, hand-outs, or other activities that focus on native plants, can be tailored to the seasonal plants that are growing or blooming during those events (in spring or fall).

[15] "Easter Eggstravaganza," <https://deepwoodmuseum.org/event-calendar/event/434/2019-04-20/>.

[16] "Children's Halloween Party," <https://deepwoodmuseum.org/event-calendar/event/98/2017-10-28/>

Timeline

- 1893: Dr. Luke Port secures property in September. Construction on house begins in October.
- 1894: Construction on house completed in August. Plan and construction of carriage house completed.
- 1895: Dr. Port sells house to Bingham family in December.
- 1896: George and Willie Bingham takes possession of house in January as their only child, Alice turns one.
- 1924: George & Willie Bingham die. Alice Bingham Powell sells house to Clifford and Alice Bretherton Brown.
- 1927: Clifford Brown dies. Alice Bretherton Brown continues to reside in house with her sons.
- 1929: Alice Brown hires Elizabeth Lord and Edith Schryver to plan her formal gardens. Work begins that year.
- 1930: Alice Brown begins referring to the estate as "Deepwood". Name inspired by Albert Bigelow Paine's Victorian era children's book of short stories *The Hollow Tree and the Deep Woods*. The book was a bedtime favorite in the Brown home.
- 1935: 'Farm' name officially registered as "Deepwood"
- 1936: Last area of garden designed by Lord and Schryver, Scroll Garden.
- 1945: Keith Powell (widower of Alice Bingham Powell) marries Alice Brown in the Scroll Garden.
- 1955: Gazebo (originally from the Lewis & Clark Exposition held in Portland, 1905) placed in Great Garden.

- 1968: Keith & Alice Powell move to smaller house. Efforts begin by local residents (later many of those would form the Friends of Deepwood) to acquire the estate with hopes of it becoming a public property owned by the City of Salem.
- 1970: William S. Walton Greenhouse added by City of Salem.
- 1971: Deepwood purchased by City of Salem; Mayor's Advisory Committee on Deepwood established. Alice Brown Powell dies in December.
- 1972: Structural issues and code concerns identified within home that allowed volunteers to start focus on overcoming issues that could stand in the way of it ultimately opening to the public.
- 1973: Deepwood placed on National Register of Historic places.
- 1974: Friends of Deepwood incorporated as 501c3, entered contract with city to manage property.
- 1980: Volunteer gardening group, Deepwood Gardeners, established by Frannie Duniway.
- 1982: English Border Garden created by volunteer Deepwood Garden

Map

