

SELF-GUIDED NATURE WALK IN FAUNTLEROY PARK

This walk is an introduction to the many natural features of Fauntleroy Park. If you enjoy the park, please consider being a volunteer steward; see www.fauntleroy.net for how.

Hiking boots aren't necessary but a walking stick can come in handy. Points 1-6 have flat access; stairs are at stops 11-13. For your safety and the health of the habitat, please stay on the trail at all times.

The numbered points of interest start at the park entrance on SW Barton Street. To return there after Point 16, skirt the east side of the church upper parking lots, go through the gate, and turn right into the alley; it becomes the trail back to where you started.

The basic loop walk is 1/2 mile. Add to your walk by taking an optional side trail.

1. City meets nature. (As you enter) The park is a vibrant remainder of an ecosystem that once lined Puget Sound and its salmon-rearing tributaries. When English ivy, Japanese knotweed, and other invasive species migrate from nearby yards, they threaten habitat-friendly natives. Tree seedlings will eventually shade out some invaders here. Weeds would quickly overrun the park if not for volunteer stewardship.

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 bugs and bacteria that recycle nutrients back into the soil. It also "nurses" a variety of plant life, including mosses and fungi. Look for recently downed trees in the early phases of this process.

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, white Western trillium dots the forest floor. (See trillium without going off trail several yards uphill of Point 7.) By early May, the gold flowers of creeping buttercup border the trail.



SALMONBERRY



WESTERN TRILLIUM

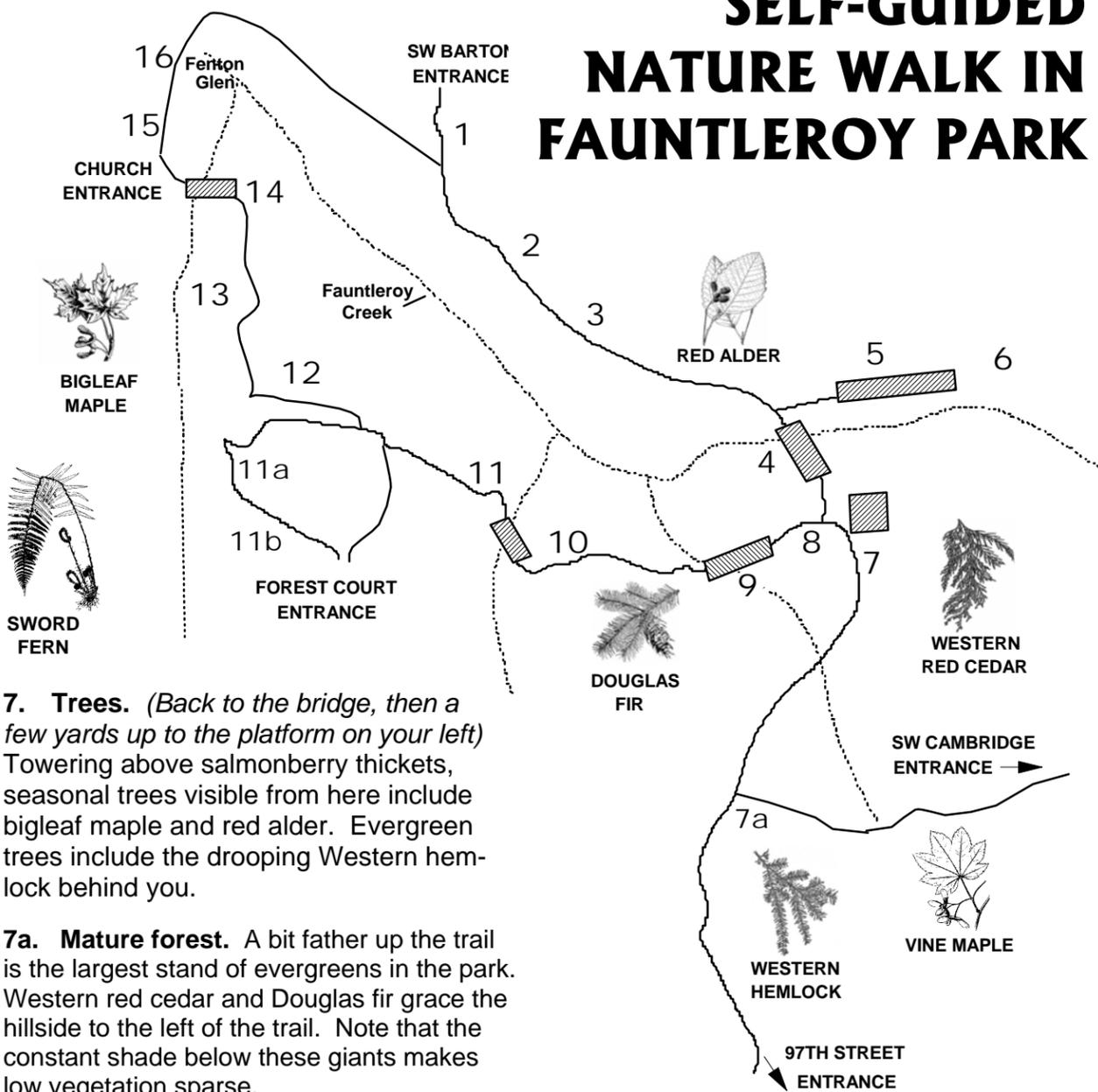
4. Main channel. (At the big bridge) Water from springs and runoff feeds the creek year-round. Student-raised coho released here spend their first year in the upper creek. Logs added to supplement wood that falls naturally in the channel create pools for juvenile salmon and habitat for the aquatic bugs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

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 resembles the garden variety; its roots firmly grasp on the soil.

6. Snag and fire. (End of boardwalk) Standing dead trees like the one just beyond this platform provide habitat for birds, such as pileated woodpeckers, that nest in cavities and feed on bugs in the soft wood. Look for the orange trumpets of Western honeysuckle here in late spring. The "wetland" stone at your feet marks one of three water-related habitats in the park. The large stump on the hill across the channel is evidence of a long-ago fire, another part of the forest lifecycle.



WESTERN HONEYSUCKLE



7. Trees. (Back to the bridge, then a few yards up to the platform on your left) Towering above salmonberry thickets, seasonal trees visible from here include bigleaf maple and red alder. Evergreen trees include the drooping Western hemlock behind you.

7a. Mature forest. A bit farther up the trail is the largest stand of evergreens in the park. Western red cedar and Douglas fir grace the hillside to the left of the trail. Note that the constant shade below these giants makes low vegetation sparse.

8. Ferns. (Backtracking to the main trail) Notice the erosion-fighting ferns on both sides of the trail. Fronds of the tough sword fern stay green throughout the year; fronds of the delicate lady fern die back in winter. Birds forage in 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 hillside soils provides moist habitat for microscopic organisms here. Pesticides can have an especially detrimental effect on such areas where water collects.

10. Glade. (Several yards ahead) The rings on the giant Douglas fir that you pass through indicate that it was over 110 years old when felled in 2006 by a combination of saturated soil and heavy wind. In the glade, the mix of mature, young, and rotting trees slowing enclosing this area shows 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 add fall color.



SALAL



OREGON GRAPE

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 and Oregon grape.

11a. Erosion. Winter rains follow pavement and trails into the park, eroding sensitive soils that nourish underbrush. Park staff and volunteers have attempted to mitigate erosion by laying gravel and diverting runoff at the head of this trail.

11b. Barred owls. On warm late afternoons, you may hear the screech of Barred owls, a non-native species that nests high in evergreens. Watch and listen for the murder of crows that often reveals the owl's location.

12. Berries. (Along the trail) Birds count on berries and other fruit in the ecosystem to ripen over several months. Look here in late summer for red huckleberry growing in shade and rotting wood.



RED HUCKLEBERRY

13. Slope. (Right at the fork, then down the hill) Trails throughout the park, including this newly upgraded one, are designed with public safety and erosion control in mind. Notice the various tree barks and the habitat they provide for animals and plants. Note how the roots of the Douglas fir anchor the hillside.

14. Tributary. (At the new bridge) Chemistry of creek tributaries affects habitat all the way downstream. Periodic monitoring of water quality and aquatic insects in the upper creek helps focus advice to residents about creek-friendly gardening practices.

15. Trail extension. (To the church parking lot) A conservation easement between Fauntleroy Church and Seattle Parks makes possible this pedestrian-friendly addition to the trail system.

16. Fenton Glen. (Right at the glen sign) A \$51,000 project here completes instream restoration of the creek. Hundreds of newly installed native plants, including goat's beard and wild ginger, will mature to shade the water, hold the soil, and diversity habitat.

We hope you enjoy your walk and that you'll visit www.fauntleroy.net for ways you can help steward the park.

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