



*A Strategic Plan for the Future*

**Lake Wilderness  
Arboretum**

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**South King County  
Arboretum  
Foundation**

PO Box 72  
Maple Valley, Washington  
98038

V I S I O N  
**2010**

**Mission Statement**

The South King County Arboretum Foundation, a volunteer, nonprofit organization and steward for the Lake Wilderness Arboretum, provides a setting where visitors can enjoy and study native and cultivated ecosystems.





# HISTORY



## VISION

Showcase Northwest ecosystems and cultural landscapes which promote horticultural science, and provide opportunities for educational and recreational experiences.

The concept of a public arboretum in south King County began to take form in 1965 at a small meeting in the Renton home of George Tersisky, a then-recent immigrant from Bulgaria. Enthused by Tersisky's dream, the first supporters, Ardis Johnson, Lillie Wagner, and Mayor Isabel Hogan, recruited like-minded volunteers and designed a blueprint for action. A non-profit foundation was incorporated in the State of Washington in 1965 as the South King County Arboretum Foundation.

Busy years followed as the founders addressed the many needs of a young organization with limited funds and minimal public familiarity. Encouraged by enthusiastic correspondence from many public officials, they began to search for an affordable and appropriate site.

In October 1967, King County approved in principle the concept of an arboretum on a portion of the acreage held by King County Parks Department — the former Gaffney Resort on Lake Wilderness in Maple Valley. In 1969, the King County Parks Department gave final approval to a partnership with the foundation for the development and management of an arboretum on 42 acres of the Gaffney property.

In 1970, the County engaged an architect whose overall design for the Lake Wilderness Arboretum was approved by the Parks Department and endorsed by the Foundation. A growing membership and devoted volunteers proceeded to enact manageable elements of the design. The resort's old corral became an active nursery for the propagation of plants, including trees and shrubs.

Development and operation required funding and the concept of a plant sale originated. In 1971, donations and nursery stock went on sale on the boardwalk at the Golden Steer Restaurant at 240th and Benson in Kent. Now sited at the Arboretum, spring and fall plant sales have become annual events and a major funding source, as well as an educational event and a community festival.

In 1972, augmented by Forward Thrust funds, the County installed a well, electricity, a lath house with overhead irrigation, and cyclone fencing at the nursery site. These projects were jointly completed with Arboretum volunteers and students hired by the King County Work Program. Later in the 80s, the County approved and funded the field irrigation, installed by volunteers and work program youth.

County-wide comprehensive planning in the early 90s involved community input to establish the use of public property in King County. The resulting plans for the park and arboretum serve as a guideline as the Foundation continues to develop the Arboretum into a regional resource.

The 1999 dedication of the Smith-Mossman Western Azalea Garden marked the addition of a significant collection to the public gardens at Lake Wilderness Arboretum. The newly-incorporated City of Maple Valley finalized the transfer of Lake Wilderness Park and the arboretum from King County in January, 2003. Opportunities and responsibilities abound as the Foundation moves into the 21st century, and carries the vision of its founders forward in a rapidly growing region.

# STRATEGIES

## STRATEGY 1



*Develop and maintain the Lake Wilderness Arboretum in cooperation with the City of Maple Valley.*

- *Develop the Arboretum so that it complements and integrates with Lake Wilderness Park, the regional trail system, and other community assets.*
- *Establish an interpretive center that will provide meeting rooms, display areas, and offices.*
- *Work as a team to address maintenance, funding, community, and staffing needs.*

## STRATEGY 2



*Create educational programs in partnership with the regional community that will provide opportunities for environmental education.*

- *Develop programs that address needs and enhance experiences for students and youth groups throughout the region.*
- *Serve as a steward of the environment through sound practices and educational outreach programs.*
- *Identify and label Arboretum plant collections.*

## STRATEGY 3



*Gain regional recognition for the arboretum.*

- *Network with other organizations, arboreta, and gardens which share common goals and interests. Improve collections, programs, and practices.*
- *Promote and showcase the uniqueness of the Arboretum's gardens, collections, and programs in a variety of publications and through presentations to the public.*
- *Offer a variety of experiences from passive recreational enjoyment of second growth forest to technical horticultural study.*
- *Develop a system of accessible trails to allow open access to all.*

# STRATEGIES

## STRATEGY 4



*Provide opportunities for individuals, community groups, and neighborhoods to enhance their surroundings.*

- *Establish public gardens that inspire and guide the northwest gardener to plant aesthetically pleasing trees, shrubs, and plants that are environmentally compatible, low maintenance, and support wildlife.*
- *Emphasize volunteer recruitment and Arboretum activities as a method of learning and sharing in a hands-on environment.*
- *Distribute information that promotes green gardening practices and preservation of the environment.*
- *Increase participation in the activities of the South King County Arboretum Foundation.*

## STRATEGY 5



*Collect and propagate plants for the purpose of income, distribution, and study.*

- *Maintain a database of plant assets, including acquisition dates.*
- *Propagate and distribute plants, including those from significant collections.*
- *Hold plant sales that help the public procure environmentally compatible plants; earn income to support the Arboretum and Foundation.*



# PURPOSE



The Lake Wilderness Arboretum is managed by the South King County Arboretum Foundation. It is a volunteer organization with no full-time paid staff. The arboretum is operated as part of the City of Maple Valley Park System. The Foundation by-laws (Article II) define the purpose as:

*“To develop and maintain the Lake Wilderness Arboretum in a way that preserves and displays Northwest ecosystems and cultivated landscapes in an environment that acts as a wildlife sanctuary. The Foundation will promote horticultural science and conservation as well as provide opportunities for education and passive recreational experiences.”*

The Foundation takes great pride in all that the Arboretum offers to the greater Maple Valley community. With the rapid loss of open space and environmental learning opportunities, the arboretum trail system and garden provide a unique opportunity for those who visit.

Volunteers are a crucial part of the success of the gardens and trails. The Foundation logged over 7,000 hours of volunteer time in 2003, and this number continues to grow. Volunteer opportunities include:

- Grant writing
- Plant propagation
- Capital improvements
- Group projects
- Board member
- Marketing & communications
- Plant sales
- Educational programs
- Fundraising
- Maintenance & operations

The foundation holds five educational programs a year which are open to all those interested in exploring their garden knowledge. The plant sales are held the Friday and Saturday of Mothers Day weekend in May, and the second Saturday of September. The Arboretum is open daily from dawn until dusk and is free.

Partnerships with many local organizations and the Tahoma School District contribute to the success of the Arboretum. The Foundation works with our partners for ongoing maintenance projects, educational opportunities, fundraising, and in-kind donations.

The Arboretum is one of the few remaining public gardens in South King County. It is a retreat and an outdoor classroom. The trails that meander through natural forests, display gardens, and nursery should be protected for future generations. The connection to the Lake Wilderness Park and the partnership with the City of Maple Valley will mean the 40 acres will continue to enhance the natural beauty of the community.





**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

The Lake Wilderness Arboretum is part of the City of Maple Valley park system. For more information on Vision 2010 and how you can become involved in carrying out the Vision of the South King County Arboretum Foundation, please contact:



**South King County Arboretum Foundation**

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