

# Our Dynamic Landscape

Landscapes and land purposes change over time

**Age:** All

**Time:** 45 minutes

This walking tour provides changing historical and geographical views of the land where Lake Wilderness Arboretum is located. Learn how this land has had different purposes over the years:

1. **Early Human Habitat**/Tribal Life Trail
2. **Rail Line**
3. Resort **Airstrip**
4. **Arboretum**

**Here's How:**

1. Begin at the **Tribal Life Trail**, which represents the home of early inhabitants of this area.

## Early Human Habitat



About 15,000 years ago an ice sheet thousands of feet thick covered the area where the Arboretum is now located. As the glacier advanced it deposited boulders, rocks, and gravel, and dug out a lake (Lake Wilderness) immediately east of the Arboretum. About 13,000 years ago,

the climate warmed and the glacier receded. Plants grew and animals moved into the area.

Humans also came and found plentiful food resources, including fish and plants, so they stayed. As you look around, you can imagine that these people found the water bodies, mountains, and forests a lovely and abundant habitat. Archeologists believe that people came to North America from Siberia and lived in the Puget Sound area from at least 12,000 years ago. Snoqualmie and Muckleshoot Tribes were some of the peoples in this area. **As you walk along the Tribal Life Trail, you will see several native plants that ancient peoples used in their daily lives for food, medicine, tools and baskets, clothing, and ceremonies.**

**2. From the east end of the Meadow, follow the sign to the Story Walk Trail. An incline takes you to the multi-use Green-to-Cedar River Trail, a former rail line.**

### Rail Line



About 200 years ago, white settlers moved into the area to hunt and trade with the native peoples living here. In the 1880s high-quality coal was discovered nearby in Black Diamond. The coal-rich terrain was the driving force behind construction of the Columbia & Puget Sound Railroad (C&PSRR), which shipped coal to Seattle. C&PSRR constructed an extension rail line along the Cedar River and past Lake Wilderness.

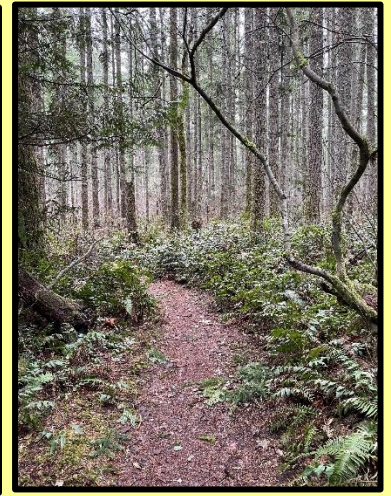
At the same time, a sawmill was built on Lake Wilderness near the Cedar River rail line extension to provide lumber for houses in Maple Valley. The abundance of Douglas fir, spruce, and cedar trees in the area made the sawmill quite profitable because it shipped its lumber to the fast-growing city of Seattle on the rail line. By the early 1900s demand for coal declined and the sawmill was abandoned after burning down three times. All the



large trees in the area had been removed. The rail line was used only sporadically, and by 1970 the last coal train left Black Diamond. Over time, trees once again grew on the land.

King County began purchasing segments of the old rail line for use as a multi-use trail named the Green to Cedar River Trail. **Stand in the middle of the old Columbia & Puget Sound Railroad line, its tracks now removed and/or covered.** The trail extends for several miles in both directions. It is a busy trail: you often see bicyclists, runners, dog walkers, and baby strollers.

On the north side of the trail is the Forest Reserve, a second-growth forest sanctuary at the Arboretum where you can hike and birdwatch.



3. Return to the east end of the Meadow to see the remnant of an airstrip.

Gaffney's Grove Resort Airstrip





In the early 1900s, fishermen and hunters came for the wildlife in the area and stayed in cabins built along the lake. It proved to be a popular vacation destination, and in 1926 Tom and Kane Gaffney began developing a resort on the lake that offered indoor and outdoor recreation. It was named Gaffney's Grove. Lake Wilderness Lodge, immediately east of the Arboretum, was constructed in the early 1950s.

The Gaffney brothers built a 2,400-foot airstrip to bring visitors to the resort. The **airstrip extended along the area that is now the Arboretum's Meadow**. Tall trees grew on both sides of the airstrip. The resort's popularity declined over the next decade and the park was sold to King County in 1964. Walk the length of the Meadow and note what is now on either side: gazebo for social and educational gatherings, a Woodland Garden, and the Tribal Life Trail.

4. Finish your tour at the **main entrance to the Lake Wilderness Arboretum**.

### Lake Wilderness Arboretum



In 1965 a group of supporters incorporated the South King County Arboretum Foundation as a nonprofit organization, with the goal to establish an arboretum in south King County. An arboretum is a garden containing collections of trees and plants. 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 more than 40

acres of the former Gaffney's Grove resort property that surrounded the resort's airstrip.

In 1970, King County engaged an architect whose overall design for the South King County Arboretum was approved by the Parks Department and endorsed by the Foundation. Since then, multitudes of volunteers and members have consistently helped develop the Arboretum and have added new plants and gardens.

In 2003, the Arboretum was transferred from King County to the City of Maple Valley and its name was changed to Lake Wilderness Arboretum, as shown on the overhead sign at the main entrance. The Lake Wilderness Arboretum Foundation works with the City of Maple Valley to develop and manage the property.

### **The Back Story:**

Human geographers study relationships between humans and their interactions with the environment. They often notice that those relationships and interactions change over time as cultural preferences change.

We expect the Arboretum to be here for many years. You and your children and grandchildren will be able to visit the Arboretum when you take time to understand and appreciate it. What is your relationship with the environment here in the Lake Wilderness Arboretum?

The Arboretum has many purposes including educational, conservation, and to provide rest, play, and scientific study. When you come to the Arboretum and do these things—learn, relax, and play—you will feel connected with the plants and trees here. See the information bulletin boards for activity ideas. Come again and bring friends. Show them how the purposes and appearances of the land have changed.