

## Genesee Park Natural Areas: Past Efforts, Vegetation Survey and Recommendations for Future Stewardship



Photo courtesy of Charles Anderson Landscape Architecture

### Executive Summary

Genesee Park, located on Lake Washington in the Mount Baker neighborhood of southeast Seattle, is an important site for active and passive recreation and wildlife, providing lawns and trails, playing fields and approximately 10 acres of natural areas, including about four acres of second growth forest. Most of the site formed part of Wetmore Slough prior to lowering of the lake in 1916 with the construction of the Lake Washington Ship Canal. The City of Seattle purchased the site in 1947, and subsequently used it as a landfill until 1963. Park development began in 1968. In 1996 Starflower Foundation began working with Seattle Parks and Recreation, and other stakeholders, concentrating on reestablishing native vegetation in several zones in the portion of the park north of South Genesee Street.

From 1997 through 2006, more than 50,000 native plants were planted in five different management zones at Genesee Park. In addition, a large amount and variety of native plant seed was sown. An average of 550 person-hours a year were spent doing maintenance on the project, primarily consisting of hand-removal of non-native plants. Maintenance hours decreased towards the end of Starflower's involvement with the project, with 200 person-hours scheduled for maintenance in 2007.

In the spring of 2007, Starflower Foundation partnered with Seattle Urban Nature to assess the composition of the plant communities at the park. Data was collected using the line-intercept method on 25 transects that spanned each of the three sampled management zones. In addition,

Starflower Foundation assembled comprehensive planting and seeding lists for each management zone.

A total of 207 native species were planted and/or seeded in Genesee Meadow by Starflower Foundation from 1996 to 2007. During the 2007 survey, a total of 140 species were recorded: 95 native, 40 non-native (of which 16 are considered potentially invasive) and five that were not identified to species. Potentially invasive species found were mostly seedlings. Seven of the 16 potentially invasive species found showed an average percent cover in zones where they were found of less than 1%, five an average percent cover of 1%, and four an average percent cover between 2 and 5%. A total of 120 species that were planted and/or seeded were not located during the survey.

Based on the survey's findings, Section VI of this report includes recommendations for managing invasive species, improving structural diversity and increasing conifer regeneration developed for future stewards of the area. Of note is the importance of encouraging the development of a structurally diverse, species-rich conifer forest on the site. Care should be taken that invasive species do not regain a foothold. Also, young conifers should be encouraged by periodically clearing competing plants around them and mulching with woodchips.