

A Folklore Data Walk: Creating More-Than-Human Folklore for the future

Exploring Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park: A Folklore Data Walk

On April 25th, 2025, as part of the Time in Nature Story Walks for Earth Week series, Sophie Sparkes and Dr Linda Aloysius facilitated "Explore Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park: A Folklore Data Walk".

This walk invited participants to discover the plants and their stories within the park, and to challenge the traditional human-centric view of folklore and instead to imagine the stories and messages plants might want to send to the future as a reflection of what they experienced in the park.

Armed with unique guides for 10 park plants, participants searched for specific flora, mapping their journey and learning about each plant's history, uses, and folklore. After reading the guide, they marked the plant's location and the main feeling they had about the plant on the map, connecting with nature emotionally.

Participants were armed with a pen, a clipboard and our Plant ID guides as they did their walk around the park. Here you can see the entry for Mediterranean spurge with some of the spurge in the background.



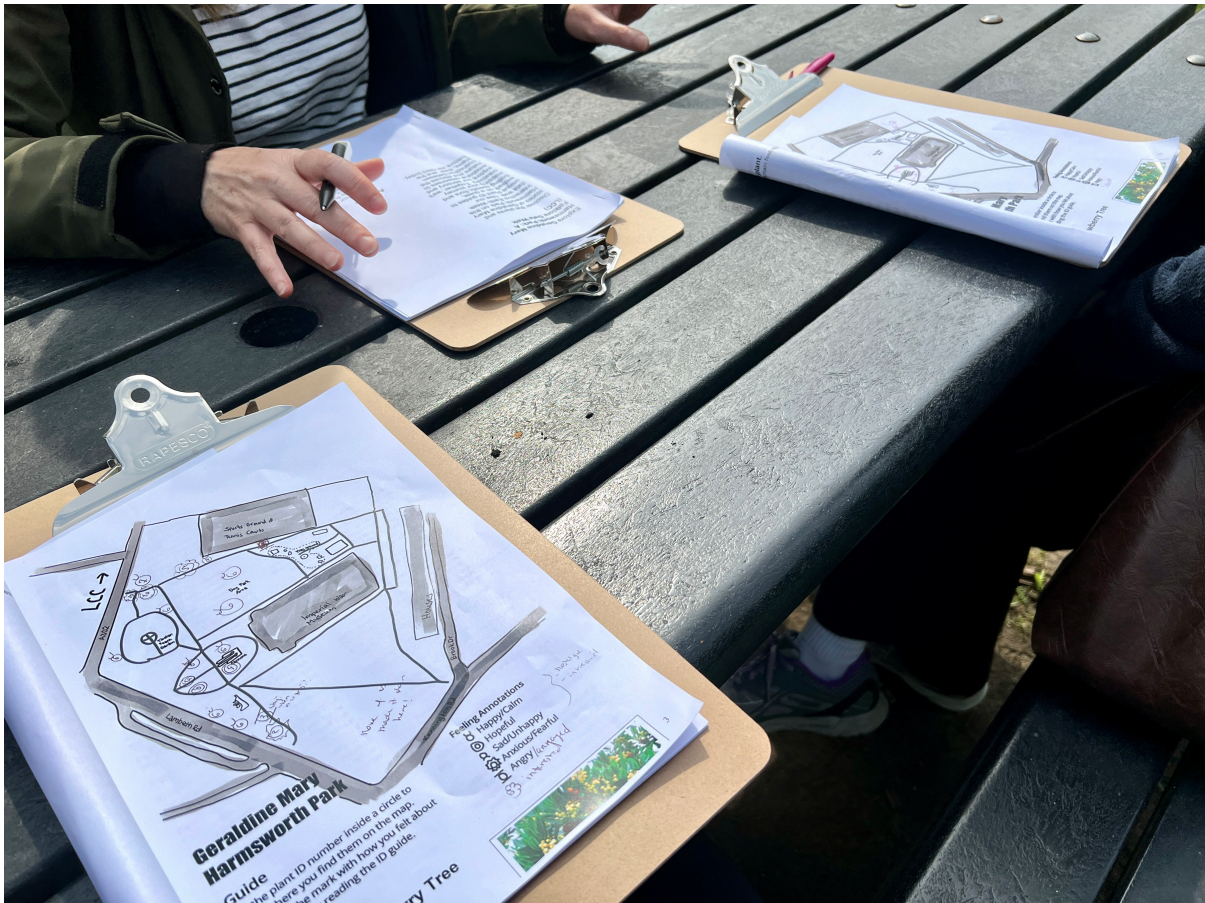
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Plant hunting in Geraldine Mary Harmsworth park. You can see one of the park's Monkey Puzzel trees on the far right, which was one of the plants in the Plant ID guides.

After the walk, everyone gathered to discuss their experiences and findings, tallying the emotions they marked on their maps.

Attendees reflected on their responses, paying attention to any unexpected feelings, including those tied to plants' status or negative folklore. This led to the idea of folklore's role in passing messages across generations.



Discussing what plants we found, how they made us feel, and the folklore associated with them.

Building on the walk's goal to explore the "more than human" perspective, we all considered how plants might tell stories and what messages they would send to the future.

To help attendees think like a plant, everyone created individual mind maps, connecting plant characters to other elements in their environment like humans, weather, and other plants, thinking about their interactions, challenges, and solutions.

From there we collaboratively crafted two short folklores from the perspective two individual plants in the park right now, sharing the messages they want to send to the future. We focused on the Rosemary and the Daisy, imagining their unique insights and wisdom from their experiences in the park.

Rosemary's Message: Grow Strong for Yourself

I am the Rosemary plant in the park. My strong scent and tough needles protect me and make the soil better right around me. Humans use me and call me protective, but I do this because it helps me be strong and healthy. My message to future plants is this: focus on growing strong for yourself first. When you take care of yourself, you also make the world a better place for others.



The rosemary we found in the park on the day was baldly way through flowering.

Daisy's Message: Embrace your Inner Complexity

I am the Daisy in the grass. I'm often just walked on. You may think I'm simple, but I contain multitudes. My yellow centre is actually many individual flowers working as one community. The way the humans mow their lawns helps me grow well here, even if it doesn't help the grass around me as much. To future plants: understand and embrace your own inner richness. And accept that conditions that help you thrive mightn't help your neighbours grow.



The lawn areas of the park were covered in waves of daisies

Our aim throughout the walk was to challenge the traditional view of folklore and consider the potential "folklore" that exists from a non-human perspective. By imagining the stories and messages plants might want to share about their current lives and concerns in the park, we aimed to gain a deeper empathy and understanding of the "more than human" world and the complex interactions within the ecosystem.