

Ryken, A. E. (2009). Interpreting nature: Connecting to visitor thinking. *Roots: Botanic Gardens Conservation International Education Review*, 6 (1), 9-13.

Summary

When interpreting nature for garden visitors we face the dilemma of nurturing visitors' unique interpretations while simultaneously encouraging a thoughtful exploration of issues. In this essay I compare two views of learning—the transmission model and the contextual model. To demonstrate that simply providing information limits our view of teaching and learning I consider four different ways that visitors understood and interpreted nature within the W.W. Seymour Botanical Conservatory in Tacoma, Washington, USA. Too often we focus on whether or not visitors understand a particular interpretative message rather than how visitors create their own interpretations from these natural settings.