

THE MILDRED E. MATHIAS BOTANICAL GARDEN  
777 Tiverton Avenue  
Los Angeles  
Los Angeles County  
California

HALS CA-101  
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
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## HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

### THE MILDRED E. MATHIAS BOTANICAL GARDEN

HALS NO. CA-101

Location: 777 Tiverton Avenue, Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, California

Lat: 34.063737 Long: -118.442451 (Southwest corner of site, itouchmap.com)

Significance: The Mildred E. Mathias Botanical Garden at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), dates to 1929, the year the campus was founded. From 1956-1974, the botanical garden came under the directorship of pioneering horticulturist Mildred E. Mathias, a botanist, and one of UCLA's first female faculty members. Mathias developed an international following, due to her conservation efforts, expertise in tropical biology, and pioneering work in ethnopharmacology at UCLA. The Mildred E. Mathias Botanical Garden was named in her honor in 1979 for her contributions to horticulture.

Description: The Mildred E. Mathias Botanical Garden is a 7-acre, sloping and forest-like site, located on the southeast side of the UCLA campus. It contains nearly 3,000 species of living plants, including Asian and Australian variety, diverse and unique subtropical trees and tropical trees, one of the largest Torrey Pines in the world, one of the tallest dawn redwoods in North America, and a rare living fossil from China, discovered in 1949.

History: Founded in 1929, the botanical garden originally consisted of an ancient arroyo on the east side of campus, flanked by native willow trees and coastal sage scrub. As the University's campus developed, the site's original manager, George C. Groenewegen, acquired plants through donations from national and local collections, such as the U.S. Agriculture Collection, the Huntington Botanical Gardens, and the Arthur Letts Holmby House estate and gardens in Hollywood (Letts having purchased the land upon which UCLA was developed).

During the first thirty years, the garden contained an important collection of Ficus and Eucalyptus trees, which then came to dominate the landscape of the Southern California region. By 1947, the collection consisted of 1,500 plants, and new supervisor Donald P. Wooley increased it to 3,500 varieties. Beginning in 1956, Mildred E. Mathias expanded the collection of experimental subtropical trees in the botanical garden and created an arboretum on the site.

While director of the botanical garden from 1956-1974, Mildred E. Mathias made significant contributions to her profession as an author, a garden expert on television, and through her pioneering work in the new field of ethnopharmacology. A beloved member of the UCLA community, her landscape tours promoted the exceptional beauty of the campus. Her leadership

efforts garnered her numerous awards and recognition. After her retirement in 1974, she led adult education trips to Costa Rica, Chile and the Amazon that would aid conservation efforts.

The botanical garden was named for Mildred E. Mathias in 1979. At that time, it was “forest-like.” Subsequent director Dr. Arthur C. Gibson renovated the site and encouraged the use of “sun-loving” plants. An addition to the garden came in 1996 when the Nest, an outdoor seating area, was created. New paths and other improvements to access were added in that year.

A recent donation to the Mildred E. Mathias Botanical Garden will enable UCLA to implement a new phase of plans for renewing the garden and improving access. Enhancing the visibility of the “hidden jewel,” as it is locally known, will benefit the UCLA campus and the Los Angeles community.

Sources: *Mildred E. Mathias Botanical Garden at UCLA*. Los Angeles: UCLA/Life Sciences College of Letters and Science, n.d.

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Los Angeles Times. “Garden Spot.” *Los Angeles Times*, July 13, 1986. Accessed July 13, 2013. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times (1881-1989). Available at the Los Angeles Public Library website, [www.lapl.org](http://www.lapl.org).

Historian: Katy Lain, formerly employed by ICF International (2002-2013)  
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Mildred E. Mathias Botanical Garden at UCLA entrance (Katy Lain, 2013).