

FLEMING GARDEN
Restricted Address
Berkeley
Alameda County
California

HALS CA-43
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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
Washington, DC 20240-0001

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FLEMING GARDEN

HALS NO. CA-43

- Location:** Restricted Address, Berkeley, Alameda County, California
- Significance:** The Fleming Garden is one of the oldest, largest, and finest privately-owned native plant gardens in California. The garden was created by Jenny and Scott Fleming, co-founders of the California Native Plant Society. The garden has been used as an example in publications and on public garden tours.
- Description:** The Fleming garden is a private residential garden on a steep, irregular, one-half acre lot in the Berkeley Hills neighborhood of Berkeley. The garden rises at the street from a woodland garden, to a terrace with a small meadow, waterfall, patio, and swimming pool, and then to a hillside garden with a zigzag path.
- History:** Scott and Jenny (1924-2008) Fleming purchased their hillside lot circa 1950. They excavated a level area and built their house with the help of college students. Circa 1954, they planted fruit trees on the hillside and a small dichondra lawn on the leveled area, under a swing set for their young children. The fruit trees languished in the clay soil, summer fog, and wind. Inspired by frequent visits to the botanic garden in Tilden Park and conversations with its founding director, James Roof (1911-1983), they planted native shrubs and trees. They used lava, fieldstone, and other rock to construct retaining walls, patio, and paths.
- In 1962, when the parks district attempted to close the botanic garden, the Flemings and 20 friends persuaded the district to save the garden. The momentum from that effort led to the founding of the California Native Plant Society in 1965.
- After the children had outgrown the swing set, the Flemings replaced the lawn with a meadow of native grasses and wildflowers. David Bigham, then a college student and now a landscape architect, maintained the garden while the Flemings lived in Washington, D.C. and Oregon from 1971 to 1976. When they returned, they were inspired by Wayne Roderick (1920-2003), the new director of the botanic garden, to add more native bulbs and perennials to their garden. Today, the garden is known for its exceptional arrangement of close to 200 species of native plants.
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HALS Northern California Chapter
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