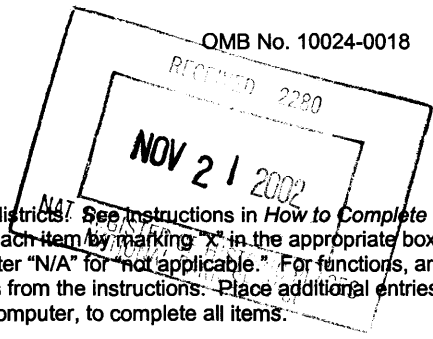


16317

### United States Department of the Interior Registration Form

This form is for use in nomination or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.



#### 1. Name of Property

historic name **Rae Selling Berry Garden and House**  
other name/site number **Berry Botanic Garden**

#### 2. Location

street & number **11505 SW Summerville Avenue**  not for publication  
city or town **Portland**  vicinity  
state **Oregon** code **OR** county **Multnomah** code **051** zip code **97219**

#### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally.  
( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*James M. Hamrick* 20 Nov 02  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that the property is:  
 entered into the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

*Wilson W. Beall* 12/31/02  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Berry, Rae Selling, Garden and House  
Name of Property

Multnomah County, Oregon  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-federal

**Category of Property**  
(check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing		Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>		buildings
<u>1</u>			sites
	<u>2</u>		structures
			objects
<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>		Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

- Landscape, garden
- Domestic, single dwelling
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

- Landscape, garden
- Social, offices/clubhouse
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

- Stripped Colonial
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation Concrete
- walls Weatherboard
- \_\_\_\_\_
- roof Composition Shingle
- other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuations sheets.)

(See Continuation Sheets)

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Berry, Rae Selling, Garden and House, Multnomah County, Oregon  
Section number   7   Page   1  

---

**GENERAL DESCRIPTION.** The Rae Selling Berry garden and house occupy an irregular, approximately six acre parcel of land about a mile west and 450 feet above the Willamette River in southwest Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon. The property lies less than a mile north of the Clackamas County line, in the Abernethy Heights addition to Portland. When Rae Selling Berry purchased this parcel in 1928 and began developing it in 1938, scattered orchards and 20-50 year old second-growth Douglas fir forest characterized the surrounding area. There were also some large estate-type houses in the vicinity. Today, this part of the city is more fully developed, as large residential lots, with an overall forested character.

Mrs. Berry appears to have chosen this undeveloped property because it included a number of microhabitats that she could use to grow a diverse collection of plants. Given that she held the property for ten years before building on it, her horticultural areas of specialization may also have been influenced by the knowledge that she possessed areas suited to their cultivation.

The nominated property slopes generally from southwest downward to the northeast. It is roughly oblong and about twice as long in its north-south dimension as it is wide. A three-quarter acre lot purchased and added at the western end of the garden's southern boundary by The Berry Botanic Garden in 1984 is not included. The upper, or southerly half of the garden is a bowl-like swale and more open in character than the steeper, more densely forested, lower half. A number of seeps and springs arise near the edge between these zones, creating seasonal and permanent rivulets and boggy areas. These waters come together to form a small perennial stream cutting a ravine through the lowest section of the garden.

Entrance to the Berry garden is by a narrow drive, paved above and graveled below, that descends northward from near the end of SW Summerville Avenue into the eastern edge of the property. It then curves about ninety degrees toward the west. As it straightens out, levels, and traverses the property toward the house, it roughly bisects the garden into the two topographic areas described above, open meadow above/left and forest below/right. This axis terminates visually in a compatible addition at the north end of the Berry house that replaced an attached garage and conservatory (see historic photographs) in 1996. Early historic photos also show a "grape-stake" picket fence running along the south edge of the drive, but this feature was removed during Mrs.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Berry, Rae Selling, Garden and House, Multnomah County, Oregon  
Section number   7   Page   2  

---

Berry's lifetime. Over time the more level central stretch of the drive has been widened along its southerly edge to provide approximately ten head-in parking spaces. Built into the hill just north of the addition is a small, flat-roofed, concrete structure known as the "bunker" that was used as a shelter by Mrs. Berry's gardeners. Finally, in the more utilitarian areas north and west from the house are four other non-historic resources: a gazebo, (1983), a horticultural building and greenhouse (both dating from 1994), and a bridge (date unknown).

Although she retained landscape designer, John Grant, of Seattle to develop a conceptual framework of plantings around the house and lawn, Rae Berry managed all other aspects of this garden's development herself. In doing so she gave primary consideration to the cultural requirements of her plants rather than to their display, enhancing and exploiting the varied growing conditions that the site presented. Her approach was both idiosyncratic and pragmatic and she considered the landscape as mutable and subordinate to her current ideas and the requirements of her collection. Some have characterized her approach as more like farming than gardening. She changed aspects of the garden as needed throughout her long residence there. During her later years (she was almost 96 at her death) some changes were also initiated, with her tacit approval, by her last principal gardener, Jack Poff. The Berry Botanic Garden has carried out other changes since it acquired the property in 1978.

Notwithstanding the alterations, this property still retains its essential historic character and there is little doubt that Rae Selling Berry would recognize her garden and home were she able to return to it today. What follows is a zone-by-zone description of the garden as indicated on the attached diagrammatic site plan. This, in turn, is followed by brief descriptions of the house and its addition, the so-called "bunker," and the four non-contributing resources.

**GARDEN.** The garden is counted as a contributing site in this nomination, and as the most significant element of the property associated with the horticultural practices of Rae Selling Berry. The names of zones used to describe the garden are not based on names used by Mrs. Berry, but do reflect historic uses.

Lawn/Meadow - This mowed area occupies the gentle middle of the swale draining the upper half of the property and curves around the south and east sides of the house to the drive. In winter and spring it is continuously wet at the surface, and it supports

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Berry, Rae Selling, Garden and House, Multnomah County, Oregon  
Section number   7   Page   3  

---

seasonal wet meadow plants like buttercup in its "lawn". Historically it included several island beds around trees. Over time these beds were gradually enlarged to eliminate difficult mowing areas, and two have been incorporated into the design of a patio and water feature area at the south end of the house. The Berry Botanic Garden added this small hard-surfaced interpretive area in 1997 to accommodate people who are unable to navigate the trails through the garden.

Primulas/Edges - Forming an arc about ten feet deep around the most southerly curve of the lawn area are the beds where Rae Berry cultivated her collection of species from the family *Primulaceae*, her primary specialty. It was the area of the garden of which she was most proud and on which she lavished most attention. Historically, large rectangular log-lined raised beds were used for this purpose. While the logs have long since rotted away, both here and elsewhere in the garden, these beds are still raised and given to the cultivation of Primulas. Other plants adapted to this type of woodland margin microhabitat were, and continue to be, cultivated along the remainder of the lawn edge.

Alpines/Propagation - Between the paved patio at the back of the house and the western property line, the ground slopes sharply upward. At the toe of the slope adjacent to the patio the hillside is retained by a historic lava-rock wall, approximately six feet tall. The wall itself is mostly intact although obscured in some areas where new raised beds have been built against its face. A curving lateral rock staircase is incorporated into this retaining system, rising from south to north. The area above the wall receives abundant direct sunlight and was historically laid out in a tiered series of alternating log beds and aisles. The beds were between four and five feet wide and fifteen to twenty-five feet in length. They were filled with fast draining soils and used for the cultivation of alpine plants. Groups of cold/shade frames for plants with specialized needs were clustered at each end of the long array of log beds. During the early 1970s Jack Poff, the principal gardener began replacing the rotting logs with lava rock, and constructing porous concrete troughs to hold the alpine collection. Although Mrs. Berry did not instruct him to undertake these changes, he understood her to tacitly approve. While this area is still open and given to the cultivation of alpine plants, the configuration of the beds is now much more naturalistic and they are lined with lava rock. Some of the early troughs remain, along with later ones, but the cold/shade frames are gone.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Berry, Rae Selling, Garden and House, Multnomah County, Oregon  
Section number   7   Page   4  

---

Canopy/Forest - Almost ringing the aforementioned zones is an area of varying depth that makes up the bulk of the garden. In the early days of the Berry occupancy this area consisted of relatively open, mixed second growth forest. Today it is dominated by mature Douglas firs. It was in this zone that Rae Berry planted many of the Rhododendrons and other shade-loving specimen plants that she brought with her from her home and rented properties in Irvington. Many of those plants survive today, as do the bulk of Mrs. Berry's later plantings. Of particular note is an area north of the house where whole groups of rhododendron seedlings were simply allowed to take root through their flats during World War II when hired labor was unavailable to plant them. As they matured and the weaker specimens died off, a natural spacing occurred and they formed such a dense canopy that almost all understory growth has been eliminated. The result is perhaps a dozen adjoining solid stands of a single species that are now fifteen to twenty feet tall. Today the area is aptly know as the Rhododendron Forest, and when in bloom it exhibits spectacular fields of color above the foliage.

Wetland - Just north of the so-called "bunker" is a small wetland or boggy area that at various times in the garden's history has been "improved" with plantings of specimens requiring wet soils and shade. Without significant effort this area tends to revert quickly to a cover of native horsetails and in her later years Mrs. Berry instructed her gardener's not to bother with it

Utilitarian - The northwestern corner of the property was historically an open field and used as a staging and storage area for the rest of the garden. Trucks could reach this part of the property via a steep extension of the driveway that ran between the garage and the "bunker", and loads of gravel, sand, compost, sawdust, and other materials used in formulating potting soils were dumped here. Rae Berry also had a small potting shed nearby which fell into disrepair in her old age and was eventually demolished by The Berry Botanic Garden in 1983.

Natural - The remainder of the property, mostly those areas uphill from the planted woodland and east of the ravine were left to grow as natural forest. It appears that Rae Berry initially thought of this land as a reserve for future planting, but that as her efforts contracted with old age, she abandoned any thought of developing it. In her later years she instructed her gardeners not to "waste any time north of the driveway", although they quietly continued to do some rough mowing and weeding in the cultivated parts of this area.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Berry, Rae Selling, Garden and House, Multnomah County, Oregon  
Section number   7   Page   5  

---

**BUILDINGS/STRUCTURES.** There are four buildings and two structures on the property. Two of the buildings, the house and the bunker are counted as contributing resources within the context of the garden. The horticulture building, greenhouse, gazebo, and bridge are considered noncontributing.

House - The Berry house is sited on rising ground at the west end and to the south of the access lane. It is considered a contributing resource within the context of the garden. Designed by architect Reuben Sinex, the house displays the characteristics of the Stripped Colonial style, which was fashionable in the late 1930s. Its footprint is roughly rectangular with the long dimension running north and south, and it faces east into the open meadow area. A partial second story, set well back from the front and sidewalls of the first floor, is enclosed up to the windowsills on these elevations by the moderately sloped, hipped main roof. At the rear, the outer walls of the two floors align. The second story roof is also hipped and of the same pitch. Wooden double-hung windows are the predominant type, with four or six lights per sash. In most cases they are ganged together in groups of two or three. There are two wide, segmental-arch, ten light windows deployed symmetrically near the ends of the second story wall of the front elevation

A substantial rectangular bay with a slightly taller wall height and a hipped roof, projects the volume of the principal rooms out slightly from the center of the main elevation. The front of the bay itself is composed asymmetrically, with a large tripartite multi-paned window on the right and a further protruding entry aedicule, with its own hipped roof, on the left. An analogous, but angle-sided bay carries the sense of these major rooms onto the rear elevation. The wide wood clapboard siding, the low-pitched roof, the narrow wall of the recessed upper floor, and the widely spaced, broad window compositions all contribute to an overall sense of horizontality.

The first floor interior plan is organized around the significant spaces, dining room and living room, in the center third of the house. Bedrooms and a bathroom occupy the south third while the kitchen, a breakfast nook, a servant's room, a small bathroom, and some utilitarian spaces occupy the north end. The upper floor appears to have been conceived as a separate suite for Rae Berry's exclusive use. In 1984, it was converted into a separate caretaker's apartment by installing a kitchen, cutting a window opening down to create a door, and adding an outside staircase.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Berry, Rae Selling, Garden and House, Multnomah County, Oregon  
Section number   7   Page   6  

---

Garage/Conservatory/Addition - As part of the original design, there was a two-car garage attached to the north end of the house (see photo). Its floor was a few steps below that of the house and the ridge of its hipped roof ran north and south. A small greenhouse or conservatory was incorporated into the attic space above the garage, which Rae Berry used both for plant propagation and to house certain plants. This garage/conservatory structure was demolished in 1996 and replaced by an addition to the house that provides meeting, office, and storage space and an accessible restroom. Loss of the garage/conservatory diminishes but does not eliminate the contributing character of the house, and in the opinion of the preparer the addition meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Properties.

The Bunker - This small flat-roofed concrete structure, built into the hillside north of the house was designed to provide shelter for the gardeners so that they did not need to enter the house in dirty or wet clothing. It is counted as a contributing resource. The structure is known to have been designed and constructed by William Swindells Sr., of Portland, although circumstances surrounding the project are unclear. The south, and most of the west, walls retain the bank and the other two sides, historically glazed from floor to ceiling, are today mostly open. The northeast corner of the roof slab is curved, reflecting Moderne influences on the design, and the glass wall, set back several feet from the edge of the roof, followed a parallel curving line. The easterly section of the south wall, outside the enclosed area, has broken free of the rest of the wall.

Horticulture Building - This single story, rectangular building, counted as a non-contributing resource, was constructed by The Berry Botanic Garden in 1996. It is sited unobtrusively in an area of the garden that was used only minimally during the historic period. It is approximately 35 x 40 feet in footprint, is sided with unpainted cedar horizontal lapped siding, has a hipped, low-pitched composition shingle roof, and is partially built into the hillside. It is used by staff and volunteers for various practical purposes not suited to the house.

Greenhouse - This aluminum and glass building, constructed in 1996 is used for propagation and protection of plants. Like the Horticulture Building it is considered non-contributing, and is located in an area that was used only minimally during the historic period. It is approximately 25 x 40 feet in footprint and has a gabled roof.



**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Berry, Rae Selling, Garden and House, Multnomah County, Oregon  
Section number   7   Page   7  

---

Gazebo - The Berry Botanic Garden erected this small, open, octagonal wooden structure in 1984. It is sited approximately where Mrs. Berry's potting shed once stood. Although compatible in character with the garden, it is counted as a non-contributing resource.

Bridge - This simple wooden span crosses the ravine about thirty feet downstream from the site of an extinct historic footbridge which was much smaller, simpler, and closer to the water. Its date of construction is unclear, but outside the period of significance. It too is counted as a compatible non-contributing resource.

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Landscape Architecture, Horticulture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1939 -1976  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1939  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Individuals**

Rae Selling Berry  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Reuben Sinex, Architect  
John Grant, Landscape Designer

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuations sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Building Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of Repository:

Berry Botanic Garden  
\_\_\_\_\_

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Berry, Rae Selling, Garden and House, Multnomah County, Oregon  
Section number 8 Page 1

---

**SUMMARY.** The nominated garden, with its contributing house, gardener's shelter, and other structures, is significant under National Register Criterion B, at the state level, for its association with Rae Selling Berry, the prominent horticulturist and native plant advocate who developed the property to house her extensive plant collection and as her home. No other property associated with Mrs. Berry survives with sufficient integrity to illustrate her contribution to the understanding of plant propagation and cultivation. Consideration G is also invoked because, although the property was developed to its greatest historic extent more than fifty years ago, Mrs. Berry continued to live there, and to tinker with her garden, until her death, at age 95, in 1976.

**RAE SELLING BERRY.** Rae Selling Berry was born to Ben and Mathilda Hess Selling, in Portland, Oregon, on January 21, 1881. Her father was a prominent businessman, politician, and civic leader, and her mother, who had worked as a schoolteacher prior to marriage, was a well-respected society matron. They were also active members of Portland's Jewish community. The family prospered greatly in the expanding environment of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Portland and was famous for its extraordinary philanthropies.

Rae led a privileged youth. Her education was broad and classical, and included a tour of Europe and the Middle East with her family as a child in 1892. She attended the Portland Academy, forerunner of today's Catlin-Gable School, and graduated with honors in 1898. Following graduation she once again traveled extensively, undertaking an eighteen-month world tour in the company of a maternal aunt. This sort of undertaking was not an uncommon finish to the education of society girls at the time, meant to further refine one's tastes and manners. In the young Rae Selling's case it appears to have bolstered an already independent spirit, and soon after her return to Portland she met and married Alfred Berry. Mr. Berry, born to English parents in India in 1874, was working in Portland as a contractor on public works projects when they met. Rae's hasty marriage to a gentile was apparently frowned on but tolerated by her family. Although the relationship endured until Alfred's death in 1956, it appears to have evolved into a friendly marriage of convenience over time. Alfred was not an owner of the property at Summerville Road, had only minor input on the design of the house, and was never involved in Rae's garden and plant propagation pursuits.

A major factor in Rae Selling Berry's life was the onset of progressive hereditary hearing loss in her teens. By her early thirties she had become profoundly deaf. She coped

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Berry, Rae Selling, Garden and House, Multnomah County, Oregon  
Section number 8 Page 2

---

with this condition by developing excellent lip reading skills and a system of rapid note writing. She was also a voluminous correspondent and writer. Although she did not seem to view her deafness as a significant handicap in communicating, others sometimes did. In later years, for example, she is remembered as being surrounded by a pack of her pet miniature dogs whose constant barking made it difficult for others to understand her but which she herself could not hear.

In 1909 the Berry's moved to 2214 NE 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Northeast Portland's Irvington district, raising their three children, Elsa (born 1903), Robert (born 1904), and Alfred Jr. (born 1919), there. It was also here that Rae Selling Berry began to collect and cultivate plants, and to develop a reputation as an exceptional horticulturalist. From a few pots of flowers meant to dress up the front porch of the Irvington house in 1908, her collection expanded into the yard, and eventually onto two nearby vacant lots that she rented. She was a voracious reader of garden magazines, especially those of English origin, and through these sources she learned about, and eventually subscribed to, plant-collecting expeditions in Western China, Tibet, and the Himalayas, including those led by George Forrest, Frank Kingdon Ward, Frank Ludlow and George Sherriff, and Joseph Rock. In return for their financial support of these endeavors, subscribers received collected seed samples, and Rae Berry meticulously germinated and grew those that came her way. Her attention to detail and keen observation led to a high rate of success, and her reputation as an exceptional plant propagator began to spread. She also began to contribute articles to horticultural magazines, and by the middle 1930s she had attained an international reputation in horticultural circles, especially for her ability to raise difficult species, and for her work with the genus *Rhododendron* and the family *Primulaceae*.

Rae Selling Berry bought the subject property in late 1928. It is unclear whether plans to develop it immediately were frustrated by lean times, or if she always thought of it as a place for eventual retirement. What is apparent is that by the time development on the property got under way in 1938, her Irvington garden and two rented lots were full to overflowing with the collection of plants. During the late 1930's, large gifts from her mother helped Rae Berry to begin serious planning for the property. These facts, along with her sole ownership, help to explain the atypical manner in which she dominated the process of developing the property on Summerville Ave. Although her husband and children, by then adults, all urged her to exploit a view of Mount Hood that a ridge on the property afforded, she insisted on locating the house lower down, at the heart of her

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Berry, Rae Selling, Garden and House, Multnomah County, Oregon  
Section number   8   Page   3  

---

garden. The site she chose actually presented some significant hydrologic challenges, and Alfred Berry's one contribution to the project appears to have been the engineering of a drain system to divert runoff and seepage from around the house. An undated note and sketch plan from an acquaintance, identified only as Fay R., found among Mrs. Berry's correspondence, confirms her commitment to this siting:

"I'm thrilled with your property, while waiting for you in the rain I couldn't help but think how I would attack the property. Once I got started I couldn't stop. Then I thot (sic) I would give resulting plan to you not that I would expect you to give it a second thot (sic), but because I know there is little that interests you in the world more than that spot. I know however you do it, it will be perfect because you have shown such perception in situating the house as you did. Now the whole property has dramatic value, which it never would have had with the house anywhere else."

Mrs. Berry developed the design for the new house with architect Reuben Sinex, about whom not much has been discovered, and also commissioned a floor-to-ceiling wooden mantelpiece and a front door from local artist and woodcarver Frank von Schmidt. The Berry's moved to their newly completed home in early 1939.

It is unclear exactly which plants surviving today in The Berry Botanic Garden were brought from Irvington to the Summerville Avenue property. It is known through her correspondence, however, that a substantial part of Mrs. Berry's plant collection moved with her. The Berry Botanic Garden published a taxonomic inventory of all the plant species in the garden in 1982, six years after Rae Selling Berry's death. It includes about 1200 entries, but does not indicate age, location, or numbers of plants.

The house and garden at 2144 NE 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue no longer convey the character they displayed during the Berry family occupancy. The front yard, which originally sloped up about five feet to the house, has been excavated and paved to provide parking spaces level with the street, and the nearby properties where Rae Berry's plant collection first flourished, have long since been developed with other dwellings. In addition to its altered relationship to the street, the former Berry house itself is now covered with concrete-asbestos shingling, and its original windows have been replaced with aluminum sash.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Berry, Rae Selling, Garden and House, Multnomah County, Oregon  
Section number   8   Page   4  

---

Rae Selling Berry was in her late fifties when she moved to the Summerville Road property. Her children were grown and she had sufficient means to devote the bulk of her time to her horticultural pursuits. She corresponded extensively with her peers worldwide, exchanging information and seeds, and propagating those she received to further expand her collection and to give away freely to others. Her renown among botanists and horticulturalists grew steadily as she succeeded in raising difficult-to-cultivate species, and her work with alpine plants was especially noteworthy. The sunny east-facing slope behind the house was terraced with large log-walled beds to provide the fast drainage such plants tend to require, and she also used an elaborate system of cold/shade frames. In addition to working in the garden herself, she employed gardening help, as well as local girls and boys to do weeding. She often planted entire beds to single species, and visitors to her garden remember these as spectacular blocks of color when the plants came into bloom. Perhaps no garden outside of the British Isles rivaled her collections of alpine plants and members of the family *Primulaceae*.

In addition to the cultivation of her own garden, Rae Selling Berry was an enthusiastic trekker in search of rare native plants all over the Pacific Northwest, Western Canada, and Alaska. One of her favorite areas was the Wallowa Mountains in northeastern Oregon, where the alpine habitat was home to her favorite plant, the rare *Primula cusickiana*, which she jokingly referred to as her "problem child" and nicknamed "cooky". In conjunction with these exploring and collecting expeditions, by the 1950s she was also among the first northwesterners to begin sounding an alarm about the destruction of natural habitats. She was a founding member of both the American Primrose Society and the American Rhododendron Society and the recipient of a number of awards. In 1964 the Garden Club of America gave her the Florens de Bevoise Medal for "her remarkable knowledge of alpine plants, primulas, and rhododendrons, and success in growing the most difficult species", and the following year she became the first woman ever honored with the Award of Excellence by the American Rhododendron Society. In 1966 she received a citation from the American Rock Garden Society as one of the premiere gardeners in the country.

In addition to the honors she received, Mrs. Berry is also remembered by the naming of several plant varieties in her honor. Probably the best known of these is a strongly pink-flowered selection of *Rhododendron trichostomum*, called "Rae Berry". It was named and introduced to commerce in 1963 by The Bovees Nursery, a Portland company to whom

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Berry, Rae Selling, Garden and House, Multnomah County, Oregon  
Section number   8   Page   5  

---

Mrs. Berry had given the original plant, which she had raised, either from seed or a cutting. Another variety believed to be named for her is a *Campanula* called "Blue Berry" and she herself named and registered a variety of *Primula Auricula*, 'Snow Lady' with the American Primrose and Auricula Society in 1963.

Rae Berry was active in her garden and in horticultural circles for almost seventy years. Even at age 90 she was still busily planting seeds destined to mature decades later. In her final years, when she was no longer physically able to garden, she still supervised those who were working for her. Jack Poff, her last principal gardener, remembers beginning to replace the log walls of the alpine beds with lava rock in the mid-1970s. While he undertook this change on his own initiative, he remembers Mrs. Berry silently observing the process. As the rotting of the logs had been a problem since the inception of the system, he understood her to be giving tacit approval to this permanent solution. She died at her home on October 9, 1976.

Rae Selling Berry did not think of her garden as permanent or immutable and she was not very sentimental about it. She recognized that her heirs were unlikely to carry on her work, and her correspondence indicates that she did not expect the garden to survive long after her death. Others, however, recognized its great value and spoke up immediately when its continued existence seemed threatened. In 1977, soon after Rae Berry's death a nonprofit organization was formed with the specific mission of preserving the unique place she had created and carrying on her work. As this nomination is presented, that organization, The Berry Botanic Garden, is celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary.

**The Berry Botanic Garden.** Established in 1977, first as the Friends of the Rae Selling Berry Botanic Garden and later as The Berry Botanic Garden, this private, non-profit corporation has grown into an internationally recognized botanic garden, perhaps best known for its plant conservation program. In 1983 it established the country's first seed bank devoted entirely to rare and endangered species, and a few years later the garden became a charter member of the Center for Plant Conservation (CPC). This organization is dedicated to preventing the extinction of America's rare native flora by saving seed and reintroducing endangered plants to the wild. While The Berry Botanic Garden is the smallest CPC garden, it nonetheless has the largest proportion of endangered plants stored in its seed bank. This is partly because the Northwest is a

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Berry, Rae Selling, Garden and House, Multnomah County, Oregon  
Section number   8   Page   6  

---

powerhouse of plant diversity but also because of the Garden's high levels of cooperation with the region's public land managing agencies.

The Berry Botanic Garden's facilities grew dramatically in 1994 with the addition to the house of the Pamplin Visitor Center. This compatible addition, funded with grants from the Meyer Memorial Trust and the Collins Foundation, provides space for classes and events and an office/laboratory area for the plant conservation program. It also includes a humidity and temperature-controlled vault to house the seed bank. Library space was increased for both books and slides. The project that developed the Pamplin Center also included the Jane S. Miller Family Horticultural Building and the Henry W. Wessinger Greenhouse.

Public access and education are also important parts of the Garden's mission, and visitation has increased dramatically over the last five years with a broad range of mission driven classes and events available. Horticultural displays have been designed to work in conjunction with both the education and conservation programs, so that even a simple self-guided walk through the garden can be an educational experience. Visitors sometimes become volunteers, and each year well over one hundred people provide needed help in all programs, donating the time equivalent of 2-3 full-time staff.

The Berry Botanic Garden continues the legacy of Rae Selling Berry by promoting Pacific Northwest native plants, maintaining special plant collections, and conserving native endangered plants. It also strives to honor and preserve the place that best tells the story of her contributions to horticulture and plant conservation.



Berry, Rae Selling, Garden and House  
Name of Property

Multnomah County, Oregon  
County and State

---

### 10. Geographical Data

---

Acreage of Property 5.7 acres

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1. Zone 10 Easting 526539 Northing 5031945      3. Zone      Easting      Northing       
2. Zone      Easting      Northing           4. Zone      Easting      Northing     

#### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Lot 43, Abernethy Heights, together with that portion of vacated S. W. Collina Avenue that inured to Lot 43 when said avenue was vacated in the County of Multnomah and State of Oregon.**

#### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**The nominated property is the platted parcel developed by Rae Selling Berry as her garden and home.**

---

### 11. Form Prepared By

---

name/title Janice Dodd and David Skilton  
organization Berry Botanic Garden date July 31, 2002  
street & number 11505 SW Summerville Road telephone 503-636-7496  
city or town Portland state OR zip code 97219

---

### Additional Documentation

---

Submit the following items with the complete form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white** photographs of the property.

#### Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

---

### Property Owner

---

(complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title Janice Dodd, Executive Director, Berry Botanic Garden  
street & number 11505 SW Summerville Road telephone 503-636-7496  
city or town Portland state OR zip code 97219

---

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et. seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct communications regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

Articles about, or that make significant reference to, Rae Selling Berry, 1943-1981.  
Compiled by Janice Dodd, Executive Director, The Berry Botanic Garden 7/2002

McClary, Mrs. R.M. "First American Primrose Show", *Quarterly of the American Primrose Society*, Vol. 1, no. 1, July 1943, p. 4-5.

Regan, Mrs. William J. "Phlox of the Northern Rocky Mountains", *Quarterly Bulletin of the Alpine Garden Society*, Vol. 11, no. 3, September 1943, p. 136-138.

"The Exhibit of Mrs. A.C.U. Berry", *Quarterly of the American Primrose Society*, Vol. 2, no. 1, July 1944, p. 6-7.

"The First Honorary Life Membership", *Quarterly of the American Primrose Society*, Vol. 2, no. 1, July 1944, p. 10 & 15.

Bacher, J.G. "Use of Dynamite in Rhododendron Planting", *American Rhododendron Society Yearbook 1949*, p. 48-52.

"The Compleat Gardener", *Quarterly of the American Primrose Society*, Vol. XIV, no. 1, January 1956, p. 1-4.

Gee, Louise Holford. "A Treasure Box of Primulas", *Quarterly of the American Primrose Society*, January 1956, p. 10-11.

"Awards for Five Rock Gardeners", *Bulletin of the American Rock Garden Society*, Vol. 23, no. 4, October, 1965, p. 113 & 116.

Davidson, Roy. "The Blue Columbine Itch", *The Journal of The Scottish Rock Garden Club*, Vol. XV, part 1, no. 58, April 1976, p.29-30 (with accompanying letter corroborating naming of the columbine).

Mason, Margaret. "Rae Selling Berry", *Quarterly of the American Primrose Society*, Fall 1976, p. 9.

*Quarterly of the American Primrose Society*, Winter 1977, p. 3-13 (6 personal tributes to Rae Selling Berry).

Grothaus, Molly. "Rae Selling Berry: 1880-1976", *Quarterly Bulletin, American Rhododendron Society*, Vol. 31, no. 1, Winter 1977, p. 31-32.

Poff, Jack. "A Tour of the Berry Botanic Garden", *Arboretum Bulletin-University of Washington*, Vol. 44, no. 3, Autumn 1981, p. 19-28 (includes a memorial by Ethel and Ed Lohbruner p. 16-27).

Published articles by Rae Selling Berry, 1932 – 1965  
Compiled by Janice Dodd, Executive Director BBG 7/2002

“Primulas in My Garden”, *The National Horticulture Magazine: Journal of the American Horticultural Society*, April 1932, p. 115-120.

“Primulas in a Portland Garden”, *Little Gardens; A Quarterly Magazine for the Northwest*, Vol. 5, no. 4, Summer 1934, p. 13 continued on p. 24.

“Raising *Nomocharis* (a letter to the editor), *My Garden*, December, 1944, p. 557-558.

“Two Women in Search of a Plant”, *Quarterly Bulletin of the Alpine Garden Society*, Vol. 14, no. 1, March 1946, No. 63, p. 31-29.

“*Penstemon rupicola alba* and *Primula cusickiana*”, *Quarterly Bulletin of the Alpine Garden Society*, Vol. 15, no. 3, September 1947, No. 69, p. 174-177.

“*Primula cusickiana* Again”, *Quarterly Bulletin of the Alpine Garden Society*, Vol. 15, no. 4, December 1947, No. 70, p. 310.

“*Primula cusickiana*”, *Quarterly of the American Primrose Society*, Vol. 7, no. 3, January 1950, p. 37-38.

“Some Summer Chores”, *Quarterly of the American Primrose Society*, Vol. 8, no. 1, July 1950, p. 10.

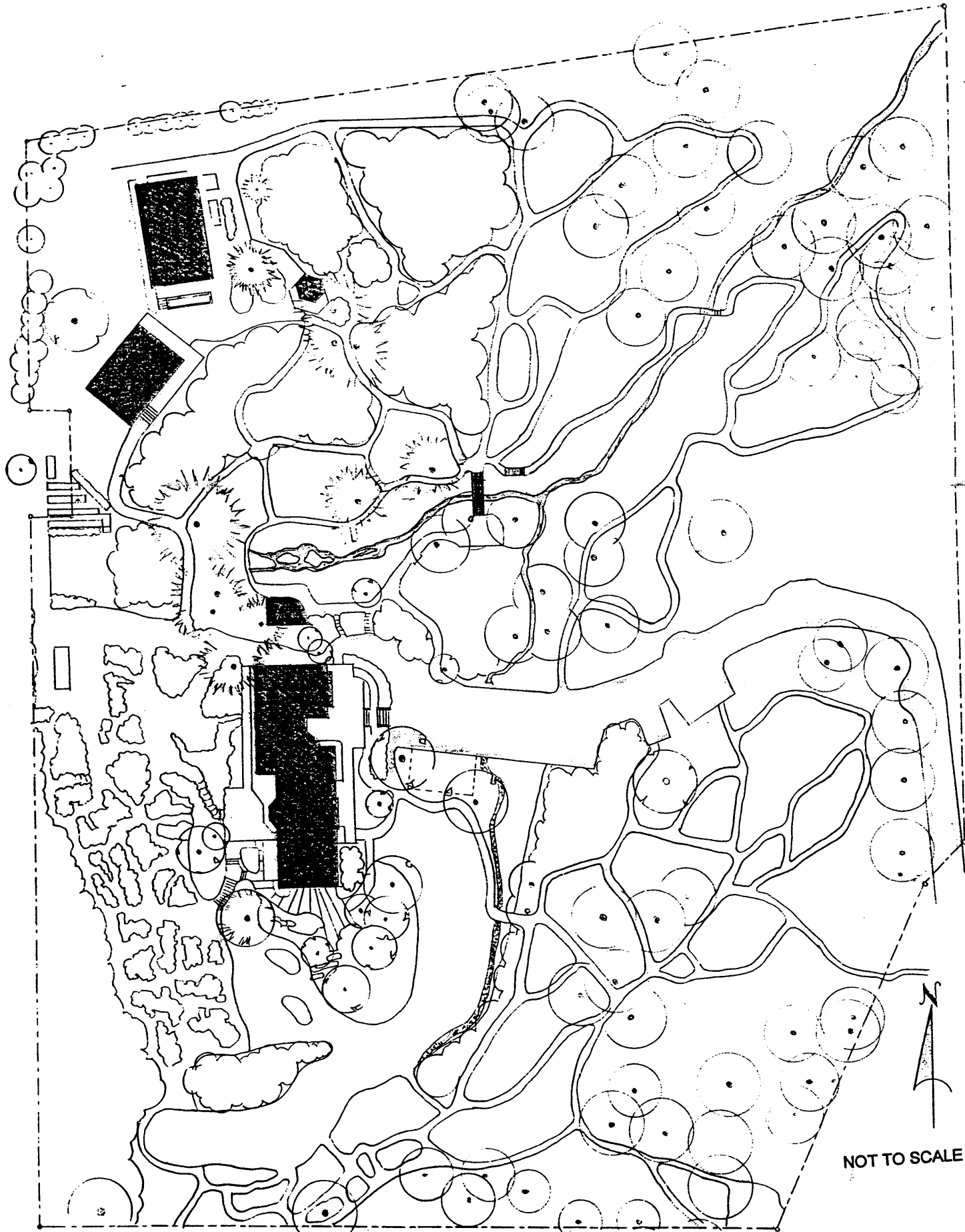
“Adventure with *P. Cusickiana*”, *Quarterly of the American Primrose Society*, Vol. 10, no. 4, 1954, p. 3-4.

“The Destruction of Wild Plants”, *Bulletin of the American Rock Garden Society*, Vol. 13, no. 2, April 1955, p. 51.

“*Kalmiopsis leachiana* var. ‘M. Le Piniec’”, *Quarterly Bulletin of the Alpine Garden Society*, Vol. 28, no. 1, March 1960, No. 119, p. 23.

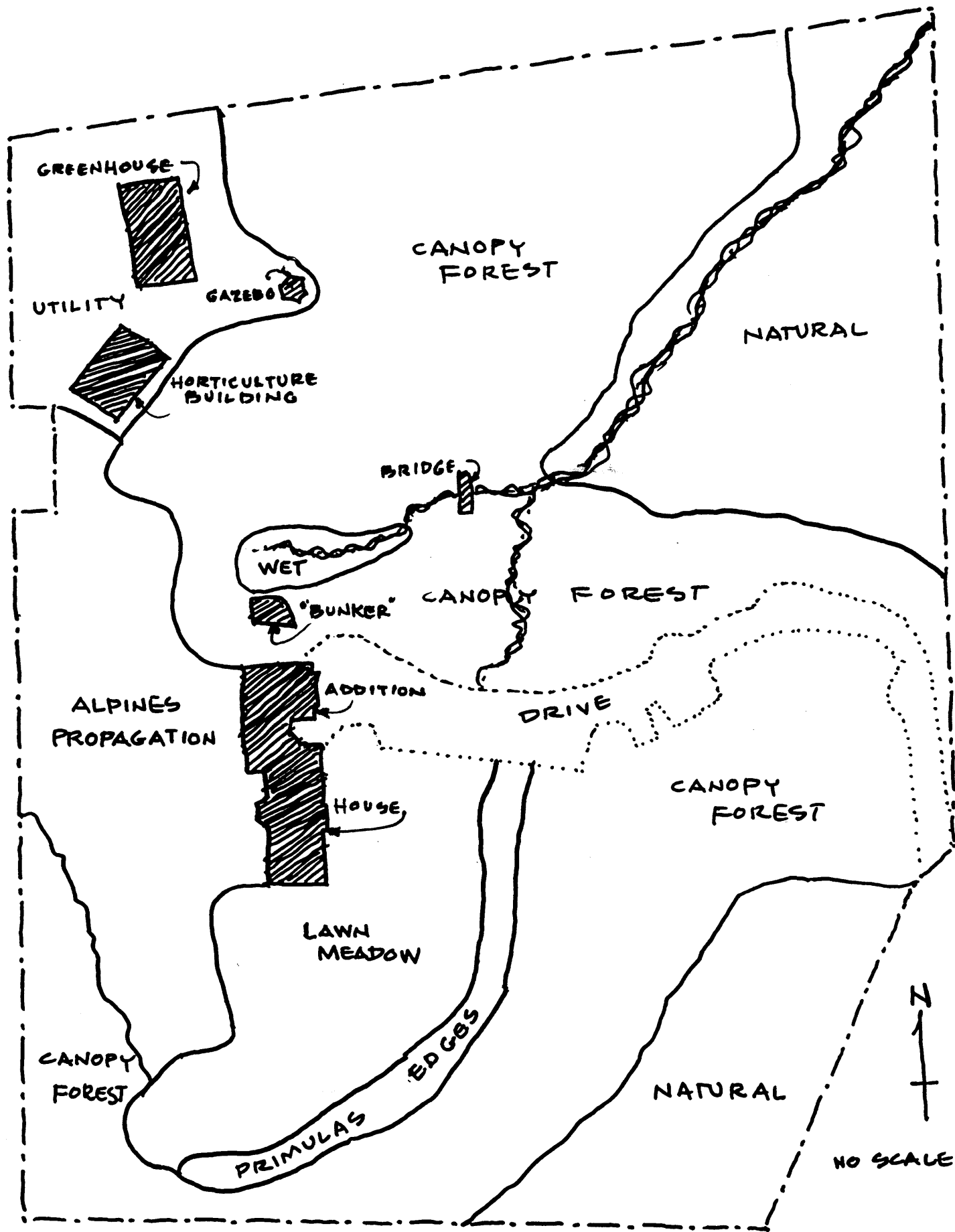
“*Scoliopus bigelovii*”, *Quarterly Bulletin of the Alpine Garden Society*, Vol. 29, no. 3, September 1961, p. 188.

“Random Jottings”, *American Rock Garden Society Bulletin*, Vol. 23, 1965, p. 102-104.



**RAE SELLING BERRY GARDEN and HOUSE  
PORTLAND, MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON**

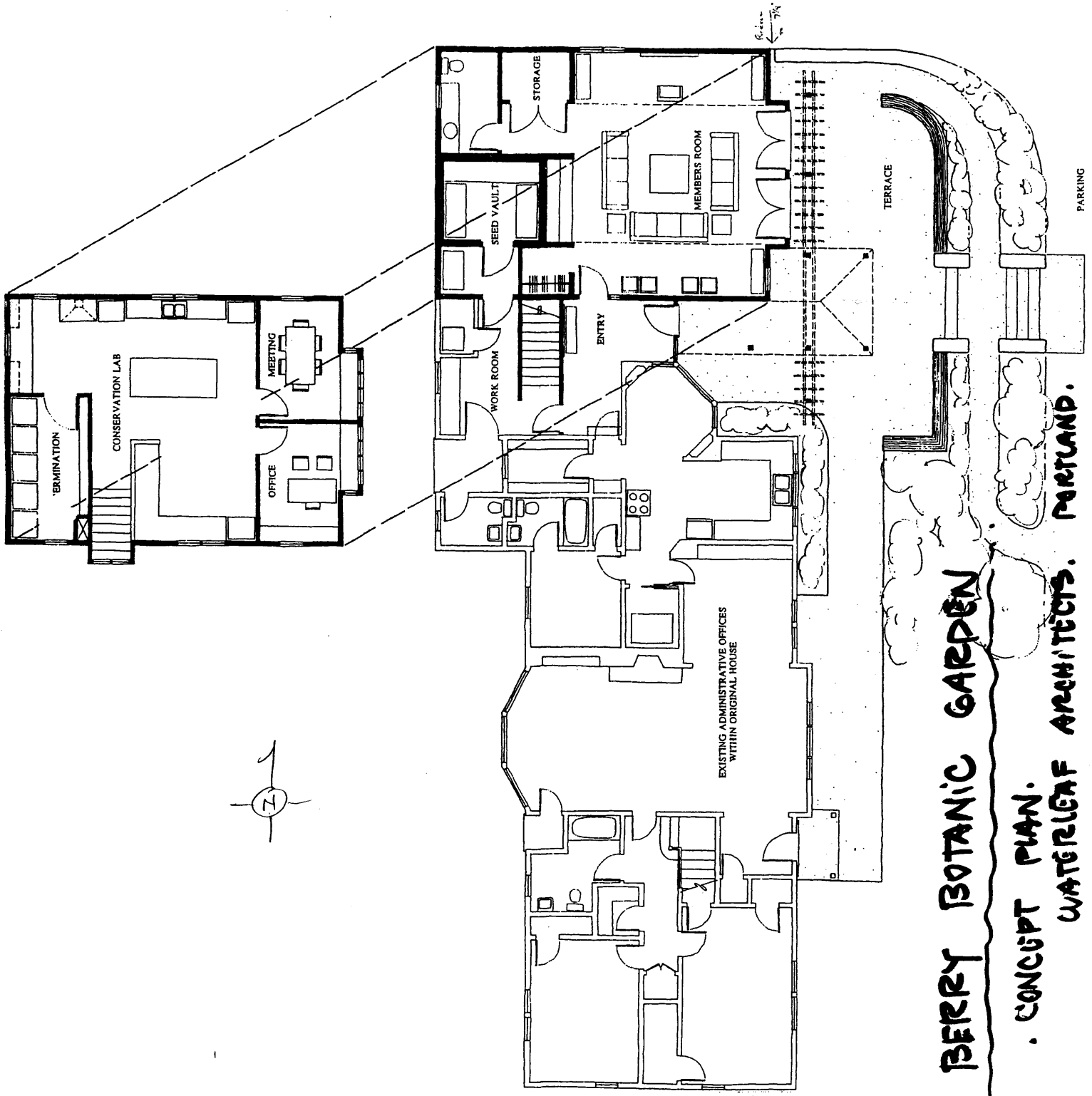
**SITE PLAN, MAY, 2002**



RAE SELLING BERRY GARDEN and HOUSE  
 PORTLAND, MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

SITE DIAGRAM, SEPTEMBER 2002





# BERRY BOTANIC GARDEN

. CONCEPT PLAN.

WATERLUF ARCHITECTS. PORTLAND.





All photos share the following information:

Subject: Rae Selling Berry Garden and House  
Locus: Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon  
Photographer: David Skilton  
Date: August 23, 2002  
Owner: Berry Botanic Garden  
11505 SW Summerville Avenue  
Portland OR 97219

1. Entry lane, looking west toward parking and house.
2. Lawn/Meadow, looking south from parking area.
3. Lawn/Meadow, looking northeast from head of swale. (Primula beds at right.)
4. Primula beds, looking southwest near head of swale.
5. Primula beds, looking southeast across head of swale.
6. Primula Beds, looking northeast from head of swale.
7. Alpines/Propagation, looking northwest up stairs in lava rock retaining wall.
8. Alpines/Propagation, looking south, southerly third.
9. Alpines/Propagation, looking south, middle third.
10. Alpines/Propagation, looking south, northerly third including concrete troughs.
11. Alpines/Propagation, looking southeast, over concrete troughs toward house.
12. Canopy/Forrest, "Rhodendron Forrest", looking north.
13. Wetland area, looking north. ("Bunker" or gardener's shelter at left.)
14. Wetland area, looking west from bridge.
15. Natural area, looking north from parking area.
16. House, front elevation, looking west.

17. House, front door, looking west.
18. House, looking south from addition.
19. House, addition beyond, looking north from front porch.
20. Addition, front elevation, looking west.
21. House, south elevation and accessible interpretive area, looking north.
22. House, rear elevation, bay and back door, looking southeast.
23. House, rear elevation, bay and back door detail, looking northeast.
24. Addition, rear elevation, looking northeast.
25. Patio and rear elevation of house, looking southeast.
26. Bunker/Gardener's Shelter, looking west.
27. Gazebo, looking east
28. Greenhouse (left) and Horticulture Building (right, looking southeast).
29. Bridge, looking east from wetland area.
30. Living Room, looking west.
31. Living room, looking south into entry chamber.
32. Living room, fireplace and mantelpiece, looking north.
33. Dining room (now library) looking north.
34. Staircase, looking southeast.
35. Breakfast room, looking north.
36. Kitchen, looking northeast.