

How I Began to Garden and Began Again

by Marjory Harris

"I should see the garden far better," said Alice to herself, "if I could get to the top of that hill: and here's a path that leads straight to it—at least, no, it doesn't do *that*—" (after going a few yards along the path, and turning several sharp corners), "but I suppose it will at last. But how curiously it twists!"

Through the Looking Glass,
Chapter 2, by Lewis Carroll

Do you remember how Alice went through the looking glass and found a garden of live flowers up a hill? Well, the same thing happened to me, in a way.

In 1979, I was with a friend who sold real estate, on the way to visit a mutual friend. The real estate friend said she wanted to stop briefly at a house that had just been listed for sale. I nodded apathetically, having given up hope of ever being able to afford a house in San Francisco. We drove uphill on Los Palmos Drive. The winding road and colorful stucco houses reminded me vaguely of the

towns that dot the Mediterranean. Although I didn't notice any palms, I couldn't miss seeing the huge Tasmanian blue gums (*Eucalyptus globulus*) which loomed over the house for sale. They formed a double row along the steep dirt trail that ran along the side of the property, a city "street" quaintly named Lulu Alley.

I fled through the ugliest kitchen I had ever seen to the back door, then down the back stairs to the "garden." There was a little concrete pad out back, between the house and a retaining wall that supported a near-vertical escarpment, the remainder of the lot. I gazed skyward at the towering blue gums and inhaled their aromatic vapors with pleasure. I trod through their slippery droppings to a redwood gate in the retaining wall, ascended a short flight of steps, and set upon a steep cobblestone path that wound upward through a thicket of giant milkweeds and coarse junipers.

At the top of this treacherous path was the first of three redwood struc-

