



The Mission of Friends of Peralta Hacienda Historical Park is to promote understanding, historical healing and community amid change and diversity. We present and interpret the untold history of the Peralta rancho and the stories of the Fruitvale community today, giving voice to the many cultures that have created — and are still transforming — California.

**PERALTA**  
HACIENDA HISTORICAL PARK

# On Ohlone Land



## *Native Plant Garden*

Peralta Hacienda Historical Park

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA



FRIENDS OF PERALTA HACIENDA HISTORICAL PARK

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# People, Plants, and Place

## Native Plant Garden



Peralta Hacienda Historical Park



As you walk around the garden with this guide, breathe in the scent of the plants that surround you, and imagine you are sharing the breath of the land with Ohlone forbears through the millennia.



The Native Plant Garden at Peralta Hacienda honors the relationship between the original peoples of the East Bay and the natural world.

Neighbors who planned the park hoped it would inspire visitors with respect for the land we share with other living things. Planting was completed in the spring of 2007.



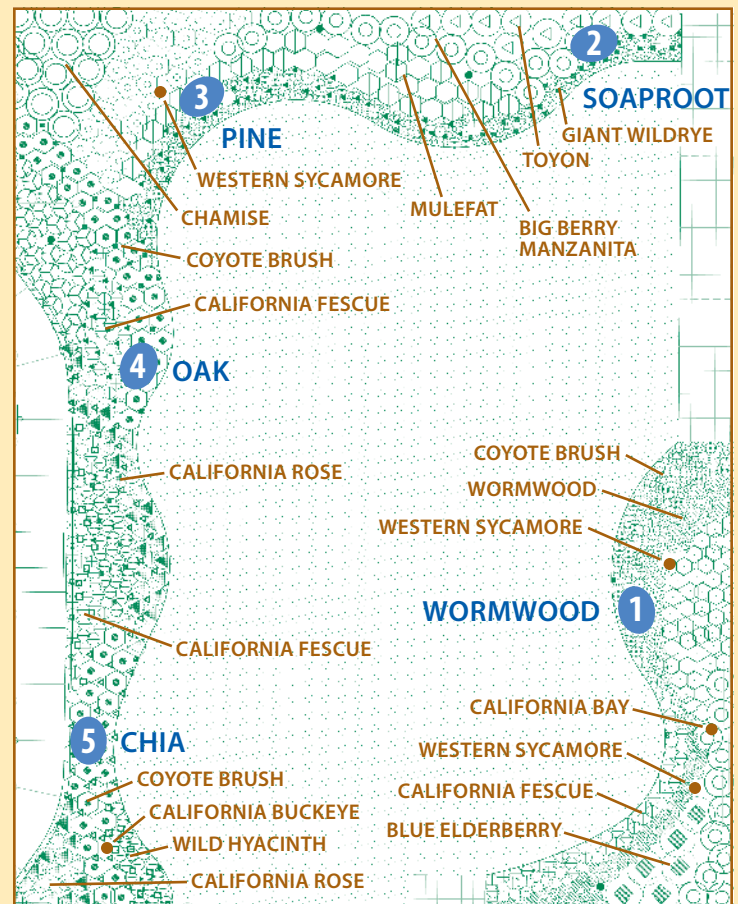
Gracing the garden are five, large, egg-like sculptures which explore the site's themes — interactions between cultures, transformations of the land, and the relationship of every

human being to history. Ohlone consultants Ruth Orta, Ramona Garibay, and Ted Bonillas worked with artist Ene Osteraas-Constable and writer Holly Alonso to create the art boulders with life stories, photos, traditional tales, and historical texts.

You may see new works of art on your stroll; youth, community members, artists and historians continue to shape the garden with their own contributions.



Would you like to join the Garden Group at Peralta Hacienda and help care for the plants and learn about them? Call (510) 532-9142 for information.



MAP SHOWING LOCATION OF SCULPTURES AND SELECTED SPECIES

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# Fruitvale was Once Ohlone Land



**Then** The Ohlone arrived in the East Bay region about 2,500 years ago. Before the arrival of Spanish-speaking colonists, they sustained themselves for thousands of years, changing the landscape very gradually over millennia as they used native plants and animals and took advantage of the East Bay watershed, tidal marshes, grasslands and hills, and its varied habitats, geology, and weather patterns. The Coast Miwok arrived about 500 years ago. Both groups lived here at the same time from then on until the Spanish invasion; many people were bi-lingual and bi-cultural. Central Valley Yokuts were also frequent visitors to the East Bay.

**Now** The Fruitvale District of Oakland, where Peralta Hacienda Historical Park is located, has one of the highest concentrations of Native Americans in the Bay Area today. Most of the contemporary native population came in the 1950s and 60s when the federal government established a relocation center in Oakland, part of a program to create urban centers for native people who were given incentives to leave reservations throughout the country. This present-day national story echoes the story of the dislocation of the earliest inhabitants of the East Bay from their native lands during the mission and rancho periods and after the U.S. takeover, and the end of their traditional ways of life and relationships to the land.



California rose



MARTIN WAUKAZOO

Director, Native American Health Center, Fruitvale

*I'm a member of the Rosebud Sioux tribe of Lakota, and grew up in South Dakota. . . Federal Relocation in the 60s saw a huge migration of Indian people into urban areas. . . I followed that pattern and moved out here in '73. . . Look at how many tribes we have in our community—over 200 tribes are represented in the Fruitvale District. Now that's diversity!*



SHIRLEY JACKSON

Park Neighbor

*My dad and my mom were from Oklahoma, and they had come from Las Cruces New Mexico. They really didn't talk about family history. You know how today kids are right under the grown ups listening to everything they say? We weren't allowed to do that. All I know is, my mother said on her side her grandmother was Cherokee and on my father's side my grandmother was Blackfoot. We have Indian in us and the hair stops at my mother.*

People of many races  
and cultures in Fruitvale have  
Native American ancestors.

Is this true of your family?

# Wormwood

1



TED BONILLAS

*I wear a T-shirt with a Plains Indian in a headdress because I want people to see that we Indians are still here. People come up to me and ask me about being Indian because I wear it, and that's what I intend. The Indians on the West Coast, my ancestors, never wore this kind of headdress, but that's what people recognize. I did not know I was even Indian, much less one of the few Ohlone descendants, until Bev Ortiz at Coyote Hills traced all the lineages and contacted me.*

## An Ohlone Story

The man lit a wormwood fire to smoke the bees out of their hive. Many bees died. They dug a trap, and when the man came back, they welcomed him inside, singing, "HmMMM." He entered and sat down with them. "Do you know that you are killing us?" the bees asked him. "Our children will be orphans." Then they ate him--right down to the bones--stuffed him with feathers, and sent him home. He told his family, "My time has come," and he danced, weightless, all night long. In the early morning, he rose up and burst into the wind.

## Yokuts Recipe

Locate a yellowjacket nest hole in the ground. Early in the morning before the light wakes them up, build a wormwood fire close to the hole and force the smoke down the hole with a fan. When the smoke has stupefied them, dig out the nest and carry it to a bed of hot coals. Roast the nest, shake the dead larvae out on a basketry tray, mash them, and put them in a basket to be boiled with hot stones. After the larvae are boiled, drain and eat with manzanita berries or acorn meal.



*My mother taught me that  
wormwood smoke cleans the air.*

*When I found out we were  
Ohlone, I understood where her  
knowledge of herbs came from.*

*Awareness of my Ohlone identity  
has helped me deal with Post-  
Traumatic Stress Disorder, which  
I have had ever since I came  
home from the Korean War.*

TED BONILLAS, HERBALIST





# Soaproot

2



RAMONA GARIBAY  
OHLONE

*We knew we were Indians but didn't know what tribe we were. . . I found out we were Ohlone and Bay Miwok. . .*

*There should be a place for a ritual up here, to show the public what we were all about. . . It would be my dream to have a Round House. . . Twelve poles hold up the Round House. The middle pole is the creator. It's like the twelve poles are the apostles. . .*

*By the way, if you have a husband who works on a car, he can rub soaproot on his hands and it takes all the grease off. . .*



Reviving ancient skills, Ramona cleans the husk of a soaproot bulb.



Using fibers from the soaproot bulb, people throughout California made brushes to clean rocks where they prepared food.

In 1772, people in an Ohlone village served soaproot bulbs to Father Crespi, a Spanish priest. He described "a sort of small barbecued onion with a very agreeable sweet-sour flavor."



Ramona ties the fibers, then applies several layers of pulp from the mashed soaproot bulb, which hardens to form the handle.



Soaproot

# Pine

3

**Farming with Fire.** Every autumn for thousands of years, people living along the California coast set fire to the landscape. The fires cleared away the chaparral and other bushes so that grasses and trees with edible seeds and nuts could grow. During the fires, delicious pinenuts would burst out of the fallen pinecones, making them easy to gather.

## Historical Report of Ohlone Autumn Grass Fires

“Accurate inquiries at San Francisco convinced me that this fire, which, at a distance, might have been taken for a volcano, must be ascribed to the Indians. . .

*The natives at this season set fire to the grass to dry the pods of a grain which they use for food to render it more easy to collect.*”

Camille de Roquefeuil, September 1818



Beginning with the arrival of ancient predecessors from other parts of the world, more than fifteen thousand years ago, and continuing until and after the arrival of Spanish/Mexican conquerors in the 1760s, a succession of Indian groups consciously and unconsciously instituted most trends of human-induced environmental change, thereby inaugurating the process of revolutionizing the post-Ice Age natural order.

During millennia of exploiting resources and living in small, densely populated groups confined within tiny sovereign homelands of only a few square miles, Indians observed the workings of local nature and acquired minute understanding of land, plants, animals, interrelationships among them, and an appreciation of people's role in and dependence on the web of life.

They became "ecologists" indeed, especially in the cultural, scientific, and religious sense.

Indians gathered selectively and carefully, greatly depressing some populations while encouraging and/or modifying the growth of others. Indians also pruned, thinned, eradicated, transplanted, and tended plants to expand human harvests and make them easier and more efficient.

Particularly powerful was their systematic setting of carefully managed, large-scale fires to transform entire ecosystems according to human design, maximizing seed-bearing grasses and nut-bearing trees, (particularly certain valuable varieties, including oaks), driving back unproductive chaparral and brush, and improving the range for and increasing the population of certain animals Indian hunters favored, particularly grazers.

Excerpt from *Summary of Environmental Change in California through 2000: The Oakland East-Bay Area as a Case Study* by Dr. Richard J. Orsi

# Oak

4



RUTH ORTA  
OHLONE

*My mom, Trina Marine, was orphaned and raised in the convent at Mission San Jose [now in Fremont]. My mother spoke Spanish because my grandmother spoke Spanish—the Indian language was forbidden. But then in the convent, my mother wasn't allowed to speak Spanish, only English. She didn't learn anything about her people. Indians were not considered human.*

*I was a light rail operator for 14 years. I drove 2 million miles safe driving. I was Employee of the Month twice out of thousands of employees. Before that I operated a school bus in Newark.*



Coast live oak



Throughout the year the people held various feasts, festivals and religious dances, many of them tied to the biological rhythms of the oak trees. Time itself was measured by the oaks. The acorn harvest marked the beginning of the new year. Winter was spoken of as so many months (moons) after the acorn harvest, summer as so many months before the next acorn harvest. The rhythm of the oak trees marked the passage of the year and defined the rhythms of Ohlone life.

from *The Ohlone Way* by Malcolm Margolin



*Every day, my ancestors would pound acorns to make into a hot mush to eat. I do this once a year at the Ohlone gathering.*

RUTH ORTA



# Chia

5



Kaknu was a supernatural being with human and animal characteristics. It was a lucky chance that José Guzmán and María de los Angeles Colós told stories about him to linguist JP Harrington in the 1920s. Colós was an Ohlone descendant who had lived on the Peralta rancho when her family worked there. That's how we know some of the stories probably told among the workers' families at Rancho San Antonio.

Chia was one of the most important seed plants, perhaps rivaling the acorn, for the Native Americans of the West Coast. It is said that the nutritional value of Chia was such that one teaspoonful was sufficient to sustain an individual going on a forced march for twenty-four hours. The Spanish-speaking colonists used a teaspoonful of seeds plus a little sugar and lemon in water to make a refreshing drink.

Chia is sold in natural food stores for its tender sprouts, which are delicious in salads.

An adobe wall commemorating the hacienda bounds the garden on the south.



*Kaknu, Peregrine Falcon, Hero of the Early People, killed Body of Stone, Lord of the Underworld, making the world safe.*



*Kaknu provided food. "This is for the People to eat," he said, throwing it from his nose. From then on, there were patches of chia to harvest.*

FROM AN OHLONE STORY



Chia