

## Japanese Garden Tour Topics Summary

### Seattle Japanese Garden History:

- Design of the Seattle garden was a Gift of Friendship from Japan that began with their gift of the Teahouse around which the garden was built.
- Seven Tokyo Designers – Kiyoshi Inoshita, head designer – were inspired by traditional stroll gardens of the Edo period (1603-1867), Momoyama (1573-1603) style, that in themselves were drawn extensively from the Tea culture.
- Juki Iida, chief landscape architect, and Nobumasa Kitamura, Tokyo Parks Department, came to Seattle to supervise construction by American Japanese workers. Ours was the first garden Iida ever built with power equipment; construction largely completed in 6 months. James Fukuda, Japan Consulate's American Cultural Affairs Liaison served as translator.
- Garden built with Japanese traditional aesthetics and techniques but using NW plants and stones = Pacific NW interpretation of a traditional Japanese stroll garden.
- Garden opened June 1960.
- Then Crown Prince Akihito & Princess Michiko made official visit in Oct. 1960. He planted a cherry tree, she a birch tree. Her birch survives today. Hiroshima survivor Gingko planted outside the garden in 2020 on 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Imperial visit.
- Gatehouse Village opened in 2009 – Architect Robert Hoshide. Gate by Gerard Tsutakawa

### Japanese Landscape Aesthetics & Principles:

- Human scale – helps us relate to & integrate with the garden, comforting.
- Asymmetry, odd numbers and irregularity = *fukinsei* = are more interesting, natural.
- Natural, without pretense = *shizen* = example: use of curves rather than straight lines.
- Stones, Plants, Water = bones, flesh and blood of the garden.
- Formal, semi-formal, informal – *shin gyo so* – heaven, human, earth, 3 realms exhibited variously throughout the garden.
- Yin and Yang = interconnected opposite forces like masculine & feminine that complement each other and create harmony.
- Conceal & reveal (hide & reveal) = *miegakure* = you can never see everything all at once like a journey evolving or a Japanese Scroll unrolling.
- Borrowed scenery = *shakkei* = use of surrounding scenery makes garden seem larger.
- Ma = appreciation for empty space.
- Wabi Sabi = the value of impermanence and imperfection - example: a few fallen leaves left on a mossy hillside.
- Green = predominant garden color = the most peaceful, calming color.
- Not a flower garden, although not without flowers or color.
- Choices, always choices – invites us to interact with the garden.

### Techniques for Appreciating a Japanese Garden:

- Slow Down - it's a stroll garden.
- Relax and become part of the garden during your visit.
- Use all five senses to experience the garden: sight, sound, smell, touch & taste.
- Tranquility and silence = *seijaku* – one enhances the other.
- Every bench is an intentional viewpoint.
- 3 ways of looking without moving (3 reveals):

- enjoy a tree for its color, shape and structure,
- look through the tree at the ground and plants beyond,
- then look at the tree as part of its surroundings.
- Use your imagination:
  - imagine the water in the dry stream bed,
  - imagine the mossy hill & forest as a mountain woodland,
  - imagine the pond as a vast inland sea,
  - imagine steppingstones across pond headwaters as islands in the inland sea,
  - imagine the Teahouse as a place of respite on a mountain journey,
  - imagine the azaleas above the stone wall as the houses of the village.
- Opportunity to look at scenes multiple times:
  - look as you first glimpse something,
  - then look as you approach,
  - look again when you arrive,
  - then look back to enjoy it again from a new angle once you've left.

### Stories told in Landscape:

- 5 Garden Landscapes:
  - Mountain,
  - Plateau,
  - Flat Lands & Pond,
  - Village,
  - Orchard.
- Waterfall Legend = a lesson in perseverance and determination: after 100 yrs of jumping, a Koi reaches the top of the waterfall where it becomes a golden dragon, an image of power and strength.
- Turtle or Detached Island = representing the unattainable in life as the Isle of the Immortals, reached in the afterlife on the backs of cranes that live 1,000 years. The elusive island moves about the world on the back of a giant tortoise that lives 10,000 years. The crane & turtle signify longevity & health.
- Lanterns illuminate the way, often indicate a need to choose.
- The Pond as an inland sea with various lanterns for guiding Boats to avoid the rocky peninsula, arrive at the teahouse landing, enter the village Harbor.
- The Story of Life told by Water in the garden:
  - The south stream tumbling down the mountain like a small child
  - flowing under the bridge into the river of youth,
  - then into the sea of adulthood,
  - and finally, out of the garden at the north end into a great sea at the end of life.
- Garden scenes are like picture postcards of real places in Japan, especially for people during the Edo period population who were not allowed to travel.
- The Yamasaki Pine story – over 100 years old, donated from his home on Beacon Hill by Dick Yamasaki who assisted in building the garden, learned much from Juki Iida, and influenced or led garden maintenance until the early 1990s.
- 5 pines of Miho-no-seki at the west end of the Harbor – a story and song about 5 pine trees on a bluff that mark the entrance to Mihonoseki, an Edo period trading port on the west end of Shimane peninsula on the Sea of Japan. Now represented by 5 mugo pines.
- The zigzag bridge and the Tales of Ise, a 10<sup>th</sup> century collection of poems, one about a man crossing eight branches of an iris strewn river.

(Summary assembled by Peggy & Steve Garber with assistance from many.)