

A photograph of a traditional Japanese garden. In the foreground, a dark, weathered stone basin (koi) is partially filled with water. Two bamboo chopsticks (hashi) are placed across the rim of the basin, with a small, light-colored wooden bowl (chawan) resting on them. Inside the basin, two chrysanthemums are visible: one white and one yellow. The background is a lush, green garden with various plants and trees, creating a serene and natural atmosphere.

Design and Global Influence of Japanese Gardens

—Laura Lei

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Introduction

- Originated during the Asuka period.
- Inspired by Chinese gardens.
- **6th century AD:** a necessary part of Buddhist, Taoist, and Shintoist temples.
- **9th century:** shifted from an element of religious place to places for contemplation, amusement, and ceremonies.
- **19th century:** spread throughout the globe.
- The essence of Japanese garden art has been preserved and continues to inspire many artists.



Key Concepts of Japanese Gardens

- Provides a tranquil retreat from the noise and bustle of urban life.
- A place for temporary psycho-emotional relaxation.



Common Features



Isolated: the garden is fenced and protected from the surrounding environment of a city.



Natural: make the garden look as if it grew by itself rather than artificial landscape.



Asymmetrical: select odd numbers in landscape elements. To create a sense of natural harmony.



Contrast: cold and warm colors, straight and curved elements, and flat and sloped terrain to create balance.

Factors Influencing the Design of Japanese Gardens

Microclimate: A balance of sunny and shaded areas, with sheltered spaces to minimize wind exposure.

Scale and Size: Large elements are combined with small-scale features.

Site selection: Urban or rural locations; flat or hilly terrain; with or without water features.

Materials: Big and small, sharp and smooth, round and edged, soft and hard materials are combined.

Colors: Monochrome and polychrome views, bright and dark tones, and a mix of warm and cool colors.

Plantings: Plants with different leafage, branches and trunks are composed.

Architecture: Relatively small buildings are designed.





Essential Functional Elements



- Entrance Gates
- Water
- Stone
arrangements
- Stone lanterns
- Tea house



Entrance Gates

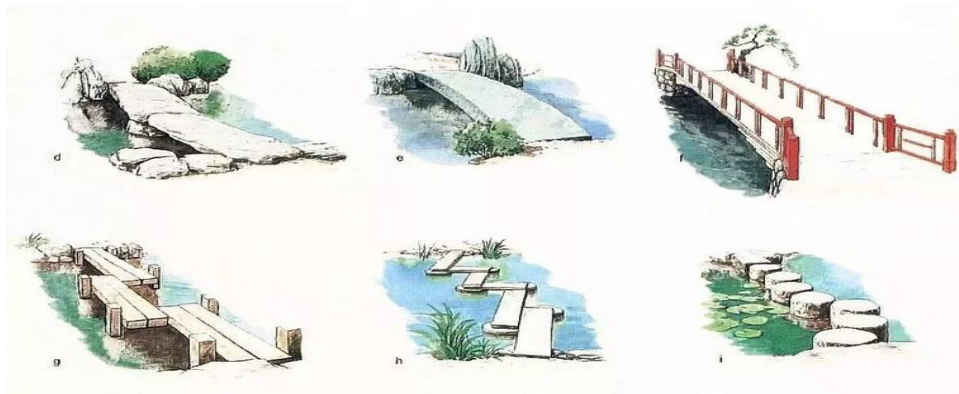


- A wooden-beam portico in a wood-pole fence that encloses the entire garden space.
- Materials: bamboo or wood.
- Meaning: entering into a sacred place.



Water

- Essential lively element of natural beauty.
- Pond, stream, or waterfall.
- A bridge or stepping stones leading to a natural or artificially formed island in the middle of a pond or a small lake.
- Water and stones—Combination of motion and stillness.





Stone Arrangements

- System of stones: different shapes, round and sharp edges, varying big and small sizes, light and dark colors, smooth and rough textures.
- Usually represent mountains.
- Stones have souls.
- Allegorical and personified meanings.
- Avoid symmetry.

Some basic rock combinations.



tall vertical and reclining



tall vertical, flat and reclining
(an example of the basic triad)



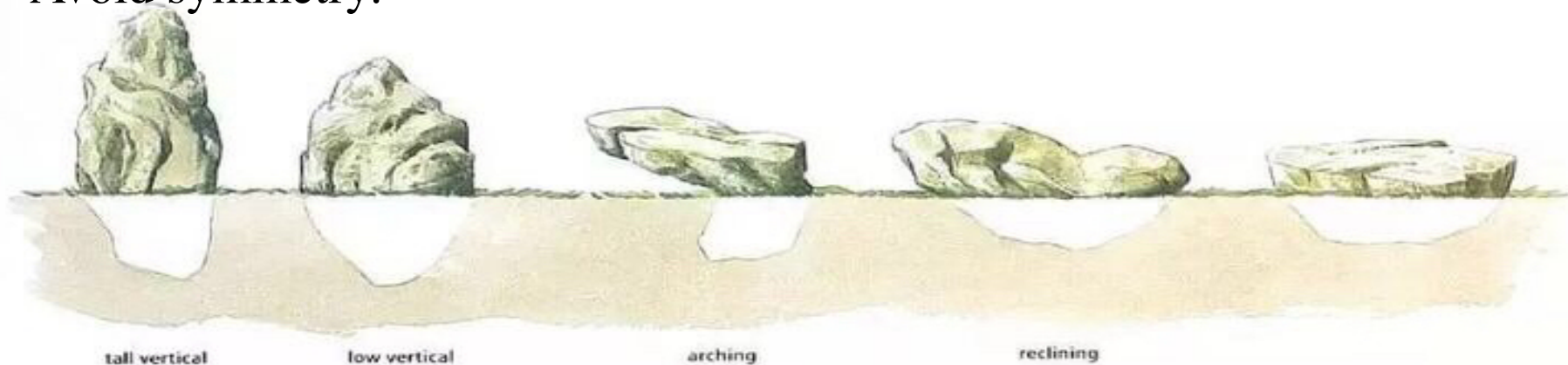
tall vertical, short vertical and reclining



tall vertical, arching, short vertical,
flat and reclining



short vertical and flat

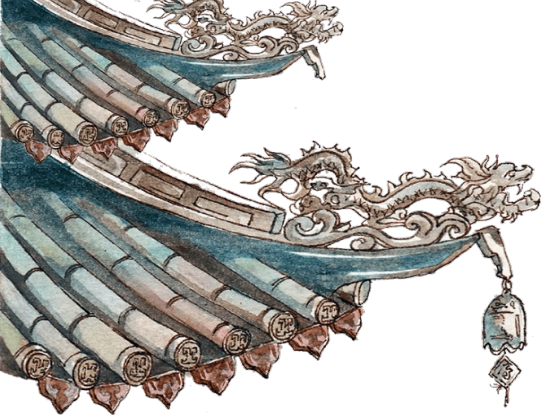




Stone Lanterns

- Mark the way and show the main attraction points in a garden.
- Lanterns in corners of a garden mark its boundaries.
- Represents four natural elements: earth, water, fire, and wind.





Tea House

- A quiet retreat for traditional tea ceremonies, which are observed before, during, and after a garden visit.
- A place of a shelter.
- Stepping stones leading to the tea house.
- Enclosed by fences to create a sense of remoteness.



The Global Spread of Japanese Garden Art

- **Japanese gardens have spread globally through extensive trade, travel, and collaboration.**
- **The growing interaction between the West and the East has strengthened cultural engagement and exchange.**
- **The spread of Japanese gardens has been driven not only by imitation but also by adaptation and reinterpretation.**

Examples



- A Japanese garden in the public park of Brunnsspark, **Sweden**.
- Roji — "dew path" leading across the whole promenade area to a teahouse located at its depth.

- A Japanese garden located Botanical Garden of Vilnius University, **Lithuania**.
- Has the pond at its heart and is surrounded by the forest.
- The entrance gates with a wooden fence, quiet paths, tea house, waterfall stream leading to the pond.



How can the cultural export of Japanese gardens be ethically and effectively executed and integrated into a local urban setting?

Principles for Integrating a Japanese Garden into a Foreign Environment

1

Define the primary functional purpose: Should the garden be designed as an educational, recreational, cultural, or another type of space?

2

Ensure proper planning and design: Focus on blending local characteristics with original design principles rather than mere replication. Incorporating local plants, soil, and stones aligns with the fundamental concept of Japanese gardens—harmony with nature.

3

A Japanese garden should be designed for durability and maintained with the same care and traditions as when it was first created.

Suiho En Japanese Garden in Van Nuys, California

Mostly are pine
trees — drought-
tolerant



Tatton Park Japanese Garden, United Kingdom



Bronze statues are not traditional elements of Japanese gardens; they are more commonly found in Western gardens.

Durban North Japanese Gardens (Africa)



Plumeria



Bantan Tree



Sansevieria

Use of the local plants



Thought-Provoking Questions



1. What challenges arise in maintaining the integrity of Japanese garden traditions when integrating them into foreign landscapes?
2. What role do Japanese gardens play in cross-cultural appreciation versus cultural appropriation?
3. How do Japanese gardens in foreign settings influence local gardening and landscape design practices?
4. What ethical considerations should be taken into account when replicating traditional Japanese garden elements abroad?

Thank You

