



SEIWA-EN **The Japanese Garden**

Seiwa-en, “garden of pure, clear harmony and peace,” is located on 14 acres at the Missouri Botanical Garden, one of the oldest botanical gardens in the nation.

The Japanese Garden, dedicated in 1977, was designed by the late Professor Koichi Kawana, a native of Japan and lecturer on environmental design and landscape architecture at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Rather than the typical garden filled with striking statuary, showy plants and flowers, the Japanese Garden is a monochromatic understatement, in which the viewer is permitted the thrill of personal interpretation and discovery. Such gardens, with a lake as their main feature, were popular among the Japanese feudal lords or *daimyo* of the 17th and 18th centuries. Because of the extensive lawn areas, they possess a feeling of openness unique to this style. The Japanese Garden also includes various garden styles that were developed by the Japanese in prior centuries.

Great care was taken with *Seiwa-en* to ensure that the Garden would be traditionally authentic, incorporating in its design many concepts that make a garden more than greenery. The visitor to *Seiwa-en* will see distinct aspects of its beauty when viewing it from different vantage points. It is a world in microcosm, featuring carefully designed replicas of natural waterfalls, beaches and islands, sometimes with minimal plantings, as in the raked dry gravel gardens.

THE GARDEN AS ART

The Japanese Garden has evolved from centuries of tradition and a multiplicity of cultural influences synthesized as a uniquely Japanese art form. From Shinto, Japan’s first major religion, came the worship of trees, rocks and streams. From Zen Buddhism came the concept of the garden as a symbolic version of nature, and an austerity and simplicity that characterize much of Japanese art even today. From both came a reverence for nature.

Seiwa-en has recreated the tradition, the symbolism, and the philosophy of a respected culture in the “*garden of pure, clear harmony and peace.*”

THE LAKE AND THE ISLANDS

The main feature of *Seiwa-en* is the four-acre lake, the principal design element in any *chisen kaiyushiki*, or “wet-stroll” garden. The *chisen* garden is the most orthodox and popular style among all Japanese garden designs. The lake is of irregular shape, in line with the Oriental practice of designing ponds in shapes corresponding with the Chinese character for “mind,” the character for number nine, or the character for gourd. Such forms are popular because they permit the garden visitor to observe different vistas from divergent locations around the lake’s perimeter.

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Water is always present, either actually, as in the lake symbolizing the ocean, or symbolically, as in the dry garden where the gravel is raked into patterns representing waves on the ocean. The small waterfalls symbolize mountain cascades. The Blue Boulder Cascade, *Seigan-no-taki*, is constructed with three great steps symbolizing heaven, earth, and man. *Cho-on-baku* is the Waterfall of Tidal Sound. Water's sounds are music in this environment.

Included in the lake are four islands. Tortoise Island and Crane Island, both symbols of longevity in Japanese lore, are inaccessible to the public. No bridges reach them. On Crane Island, trees planted to extend over the water represent the wings of cranes in flight. The head of the tortoise on Tortoise Island is the tilted stone at the north end of the island, the tail is at the opposite end, and the legs are stones on both sides. Two additional stones in the water at the head of Tortoise Island suggest other tortoises swimming.

Paradise Island, formed by three large boulders, is the symbolic spiritual center of the garden, representing eternal happiness and immortality. Stone are important features, almost always used in groupings of uneven numbers, typically three or five. Stone are used to symbolize the five universal elements of earth, water, fire, wind, and sky. Paradise Island is also called *Horaisan* or *Horajima* in Japanese mythology.

Nakajima, Teahouse Island, is the innermost island. It is connected to the mainland by two footbridges. The delicate, authentic teahouse is a gift from Nagano Prefecture, Missouri's sister state in Japan. It was constructed in Nagano according to ancient, traditional methods and was then dismantled for shipment to St. Louis. A team of Japanese craftsmen from Matsumoto City traveled to St. Louis to reconstruct the teahouse and perform the elaborate Shinto ceremony signifying the structure's completion.

TRADITIONAL BRIDGES

The garden design also incorporates the use of traditional Japanese bridges, intended not solely as a means of crossing from island to shore, but to provide points where garden visitors can enjoy viewing the water, the reflections of sunlight on foliage, and the fish swimming below.

The first of these is the Drum Bridge, or *Taikobashi*, which connects Teahouse Island with the northwest mainland. Its name alludes to its round shape, which completes a circle in its own reflection in the water. It is constructed of redwood and is left unpainted to preserve its natural appearance. Bronze caps topping the four posts at each end of the Drum Bridge are called *giboshi*.

Also leading from Teahouse Island, but crossing to the south shore, is the Earthen Bridge or *Dobashi*, with a base construction of a row of logs over a timber framework. The outer edges of the bridge are lined with lily turf. Also part of the southwest lakeshore is a unique zig-zag bridge called *Yatsubashi*, a name meaning "eight bridges" and referring to a place in Mikiwa Province, Japan, where in the 10th century a single river branched into eight channels. Each channel was crossed by a bridge around which grew masses of irises. This ideal is emulated in *Seiwa-en* by soil-filled iris planters placed on both sides of the bridge.

THE LANTERNS

Throughout the garden are lanterns of historic significance, including snow-viewing lanterns or *yukimi doro*, best appreciated when snow is piled upon their umbrella-like roofs and the light from its firebox flickers on the surrounding landscape. The one that stands at the entrance to the garden is preserved from the 1904 World's Fair. Another snow-viewing lantern occupying lakeside prominence on Teahouse Island is a gift from Suwa City, Japan, the sister city of St. Louis.

Arching over the water is the Rankei lantern, a unique 19th-century style. This lantern is placed so that its image is reflected in the water. Other traditional lanterns are the Kasuga and Oribe lanterns. The latter was designed by an outstanding Christian teamster, Furuta Oribe. Kasuga lanterns are named after Kasuga Temple near Nara. Kasuga Temple is famous for its deer park; thus, the reason for the deer carved on its firebox. Introduced during the 14th century, lanterns and other stone accessories are important components of Japanese tea gardens.

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THE GARDEN IN WINTER

In the Japanese Garden, snow is considered to be a flower and is referred to as *sekka* or *toka*. The way that snow accumulates on bare branches and garden accessories is an important element of garden viewing. In the winter, shapes and contrasts become the visual pleasures of the garden, and many elements of the garden are meant to be appreciated when the snow delineates their graceful forms.

For more information, contact the Public Relations Department at (314) 577-0254 or (314) 577-5141 or check the Garden's Web site at www.mobot.org. For 24-hour recorded visitor information, call (314) 577-9400 or 1 (800) 642-8842 toll free.

The Missouri Botanical Garden's mission is "to discover and share knowledge about plants and their environment, in order to preserve and enrich life." Today, 150 years after opening, the Missouri Botanical Garden is a National Historic Landmark and a center for science and conservation, education and horticultural display.