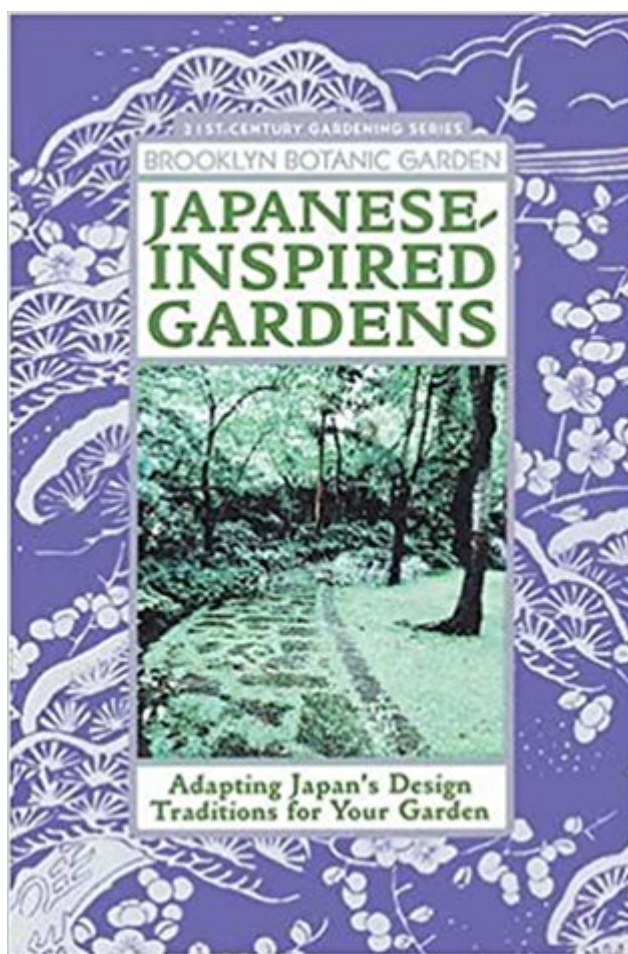


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# Japanese-Inspired Gardens (Brooklyn Botanic Garden All-Region Guide)



## Synopsis

Covering the basic principles, aesthetics, and design practices of Japanese gardens, this book provides the practical information gardeners need to adapt these ideals to North American landscapes and sensibilities. Not a step-by-step construction manual, it teaches the fundamental principles of integrating house, garden, and landscape by making art from simple groupings of rocks, plants, and water and opening Japanese symbolism to elements with universal significance, such as water and paths. Included is an extensive encyclopedia of appropriate plants to use based on creating and defining particular eco-regions.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

American gardeners have a penchant for emulating gardens of other cultures--English cottage gardens, or French gardens based on the paintings of Monet--and while they may be equally enthusiastic about creating Japanese-style gardens, most go no further than the conventional "stone-pagoda-and-bamboo" school of design. Enter the latest offering in the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's renowned 21st-century Gardening series. Offering a "how-to" approach, this compilation of essays focuses on the inherent principles and practices behind Japanese landscape design. From creating garden paths to installing rocks and using water, the essential elements of Japanese gardens are addressed from both philosophical and practical points of view. The enthusiast is encouraged to be less concerned about a strict adherence to rules in favor of developing a deeper appreciation for technique, a greater understanding of purpose. Complemented by an extensive

encyclopedia of suitable plants, this guide will enable the gardener to design a Japanese-style landscape that acknowledges its inspiration without resorting to stereotypical clichés. Carol Haggas  
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Japanese garden designs made accessible to American gardeners Garden -- ffffffff

This book is part of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's esteemed 21st-Century Gardening Series. Of course, here we're not just interested in gardening topics in general, we want to specifically focus on the elements and principles that make a Japanese-inspired garden what it is. Let other gardeners concentrate on other volumes in the "21st-century" series, such as kitchen gardening or wildflower gardening...you and I both know Japanese gardening is way more cool and practicing this style will enhance your prestige among your neighbors more than, say, growing chili peppers (although we must admit, you can't eat much from a Japanese garden- a veggie garden wins this contest hands down. Always befriend your gardening friends who grow great veggies and herbs). The title of this volume is well-chosen, and deliberate. The intent of the authors is not to get you to slavishly duplicate the features of an authentic Japanese garden (hard enough to do at any rate), but rather, learn some of the principles and techniques and utilize these to create your own work. You may not get an awe-struck reaction from your Japanese friends at the sheer beauty of your feudal-Kyoto-rendition this way, but you CAN create a visually pleasing garden inspired by the Japanese aesthetic, producing a similar feeling of tranquility and keen observance of Nature that good Japanese gardens provoke. Hence, our goal is to be inspired by Japanese garden principles, and use them, but not get trapped into a stereotypical lantern-and-ornament mentality that tries to duplicate one's favorite pics. You should be in control of how you want to design your garden, and not depend on pics you got out of a book. In fact, to the degree one can design their own garden without depending on copying a book design shows the degree of understanding one has of basic principles, such as pruning and rock arranging skills appropriate for small landscapes. So here we are. For an instruction project like this, we first need to assemble a team of experts that can guide us reliably. And that's precisely what editor (I \*think\* she is the editor? Can't remember) Patricia Jonas has done. Besides providing a fine introduction, Ms. Jonas also contributed an extensive section (last section of the book) on appropriate plant selections in attempting to re-create a particular environment. Many Western enthusiasts perhaps haven't yet realized that different scenes require different planting styles...an attempt to re-create a mountain or forest scene (maybe in a corner), for example, requires a different technique than a hill or field scene (assuming one has the

space). Ponds and stream designs also have their own techniques. Contributions from other authors include well-known designer David Slawson's essay on authenticity in Japanese garden design. Essentially, Slawson sets the tone for the whole book in emphasizing seeking the "spirit" of this aesthetic, rather than merely focusing on stereotypical materials, such as lanterns and spickets. Well-known writer and Kyoto garden-designer Marc Peter Keane contributes a fine essay looking at two famous garden styles- tea gardens and stroll gardens. While not many gardeners will have room on their property to include an extensive stroll garden or a winding path through an elaborate tea garden, nonetheless the techniques (such as hiding and revealing scenes along a path (mie-gakure)) help one appreciate some unique aesthetics that make up the Japanese style (Keane has a new book coming out soon on tea gardens as I write this, which should be another fine read). Next, everybody's favorite pioneer in bringing Japanese gardens to the attention of Westerners- David Harris Engel- contributes a fine essay on rock design. As for techniques one needs an appreciation of, basic rock arranging principles are simply crucial. We are, of course, indebted to Mother Nature, always our best teacher. Also crucial is the Japanese style of pruning, which is our next author's particular expertise. I'm speaking, of course, of Douglas Roth, of Journal of Japanese Gardening (JOJG) fame. Roth's chapter on pruning is for me one of the highlights of the book, and even though he was not allotted much space for details, he did an admirable job presenting some of the basics in the amount of space given. I should not need to remind everyone that pruning usually gets the short end on most Western Japanese-garden books (probably because of the fear of authors knowing their own skills are limited), and so we have an unusual situation here, where an expert actually devotes some pages giving very practical pruning advice. And, finally, Judy Glattstein offers a fine chapter on water in the Japanese garden. Ponds and stream arrangements are skills any devotee of Japanese gardening will want to spend some time learning. While water per se is not a necessary element in gardens, the duplication of water even in a "dry" (karesansui) garden requires skill in pond or stream arranging (including constructing waterfalls), so one can really not get away from skills in designing water features. I need not belabor the point that actual water is a desired feature in a garden if possible, if for no other reason than the visual and auditory responses water evokes, contributing to the tranquility that makes these gardens famous. Okay, enough of that, let's sum up. I look at this book as an essential tool for all devotees of Japanese-inspired gardens. You have a cast of experts here that can hardly be surpassed without going to Japan, and a book like this fills a gap in the lack of material available to Westerners on practical "how-to". Naturally, a small book of this size cannot go into great detail, and wisely doesn't attempt to, but each chapter, by each expert, is a gem. One can profitably read this book over and over and each time gain a new

insight, thanks to the long experience of these authors. Five stars. Read it and get out there and apply it!

This brief book served as a great introduction to Japanese gardening philosophy and technique. I must admit that I approached the idea of a Japanese garden with some pretty stereotypical views of what to include and how to structure the space. This book shows how the philosophy is actually more important than specific elements or plants. In fact, I realized that I have been using some of these approaches for years without thinking about it. What I considered to be shortcuts, such as using available stone rather than purchasing, is now part of my routine. The book does provide plenty of specific design suggestions and explains the reasons for these design choices. I changed my methods somewhat after reading this book, but moreover, I changed my mindset and now feel more satisfied with the results. If you want a good, quick introduction to Japanese gardening with some depth, I believe this would be a worthwhile purchase.

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