

The Japanese garden is located in Central Park in the heart of San Mateo's downtown area. As the visitor passes through the entrance gate to the garden, the connection to the outer world is broken, and the garden provides a quiet retreat from everyday living.

In contrast to the colorful profusion of flowers in a western garden, the Japanese garden offers a reflection of nature through harmoniously arranged trees, water and weathered rocks within a limited, enclosed space. The intricate pathways set an unhurried pace for the visitor to view the garden from different angles.

The subtle beauty of the garden is an invitation for thoughtful observation and contemplation.

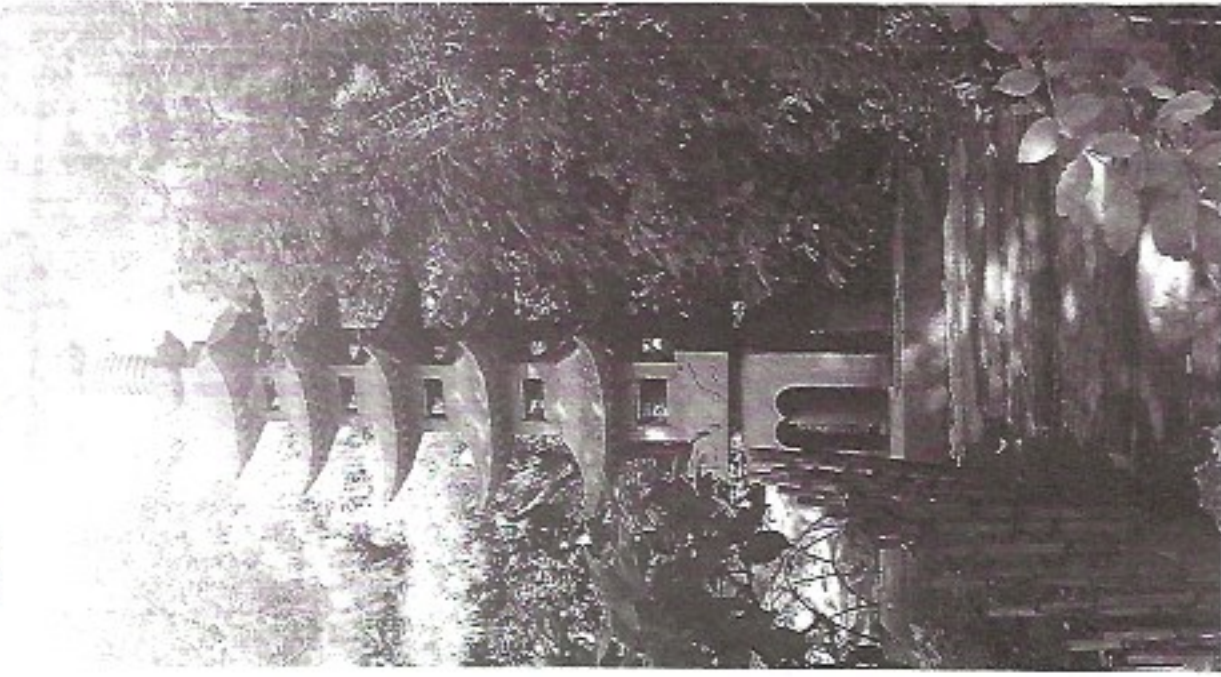
History

In 1964 the San Mateo Gardeners Association began the initial movement towards developing a Japanese garden. The concept of a Japanese garden was also endorsed by the Toyonaka Sister City Organization. A Koen-Kai (Park Support Group) was formed to work together with the City of San Mateo to construct a Japanese garden. A one-acre site in Central Park was selected for the Garden. The Garden was designed by Mr. Nagao Sakurai, former landscape architect at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo.

The largest volunteer work force came from the San Mateo Japanese American Community. Active support came from the City Council, Parks and Recreation Commission, garden clubs, many civic organizations, private businesses, as well as other individuals. The Japanese Garden dedication was held on August 28, 1966.



San Mateo's Japanese Garden



San Mateo
Parks and Recreation Department
CENTRAL PARK
El Camino Real at Fifth Avenue

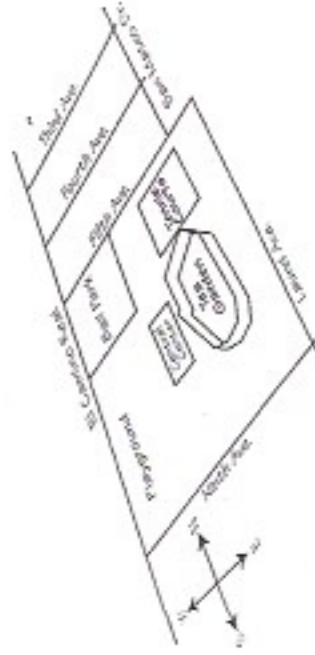
Garden Hours

Monday - Friday 10:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Saturday - Sunday 11:00 - 4:00 p.m.

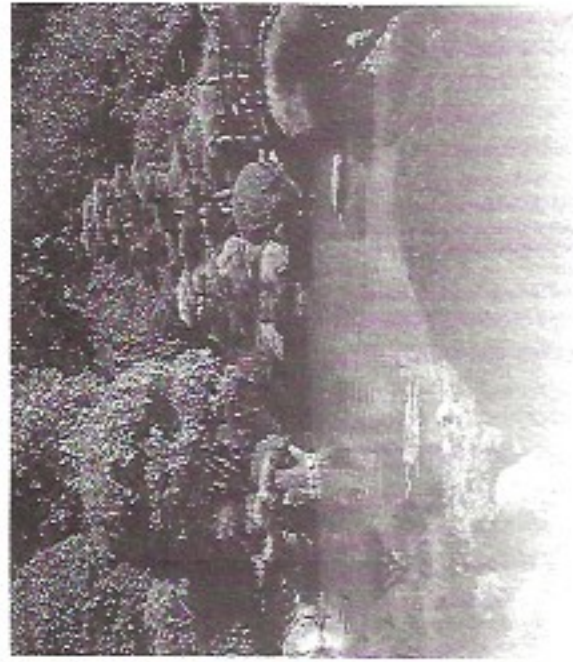
For additional information call
(650) 522-7420

Gifts to the Japanese Garden from Toyonaka,
Japan, San Mateo's Sister City:

- Five Tiered Pagoda
- Shinden
- Drinking Fountain



Features of the Japanese Garden



HONMON (Main Gate)

All Japanese gardens have a gate at the front entrance surrounded by a wooden fence.

There is an over-hanging pine tree that usually shelters the gate.

Chaya (Tea House)

The tea house is a place for deep philosophical reflections, quiet contemplation and is governed by ritual and discipline.

It is customarily placed in a tucked away spot, not in a prominent place in the garden.

The basin is to cleanse oneself before entering the tea house.

The rocks are arranged so the water will not splash on the person while cleansing and to avoid puddles when approaching the tea house.

Turtle Island

The turtle is revered because it symbolizes longevity.

The island represents the turtle's shell. The large rock rising from the island on the right is its head. The other rocks represent its limbs.

Waterfalls

There are two major rocks in the waterfall arrangement: a tall (male) rock on one side and a lower (female) rock on the opposite side of the stream.

The arrangement guides the viewer's eyes from the taller rock across the shorter rock to the main object of interest, the pagoda.

Cascade rocks are unseen but guide the water to flow gracefully, producing a pleasant sound.



Pagoda

The pagoda is the main focal object in the garden. Its origin is religious.

The five tiers represent from the bottom to the top, earth, fire, water, wind, and heaven.

Lanterns

There are varieties of styles and shapes. Some are designed to illuminate pathways; others are purely decorative and are placed to enhance a location.

Shinden (Shrine)

The shinden, "Kamidono", has a religious significance as a shrine of the divinities. The red lanterns are to illuminate the shinden.

Azuma-ya (Gazebo)

This is a structure in a strolling garden, usually open on several sides for visitors to stop, rest and enjoy an overview of the garden.

Parts of a Garden:

Tall background trees symbolize the mountains

Middle level shrubs symbolize the hills and lakes

The foreground symbolizes the beach

Plants, rocks, and water are the essential elements of a Japanese garden



The Japanese Garden -

1- Entrance

The gate marks the entrance where the hustle and bustle of the outside world is left behind and the visitor can enjoy the quiet beauty of the garden.

Observe the pattern and texture of the surface of the entrance. This is a visual and a tactile reminder that the visitor is entering a special place.

2- Welcome Tree

This Monterey Pine was a gift to honor Sadao Sugimoto, the first curator of the garden.

Notice the sweeping branch on the right side of the tree that moves the visitor's eyes across the pond to the pagoda, the main focal point in the garden.

2a- Sago Palm

This Sago Palm (CYCAD) was a gift to honor Mitsuo Umehara, the second curator of the garden.

3- Cha-Ya Tea House

This is a place for formal rituals and quiet contemplation.

Shoes are removed on the veranda before entering the tea house and stepping on the tatami floor.

4- Lantern Yukimi Type

The large overhanging roof of this lantern helps to keep the rain off the light.

5- Turtle Island

The turtle is facing the pagoda. The rock to the right of the turtle's head is called the "pointing rock" or the directional rock pointing to the pagoda.



6- Lantern: Oribe Style

7- Koi (Carp)

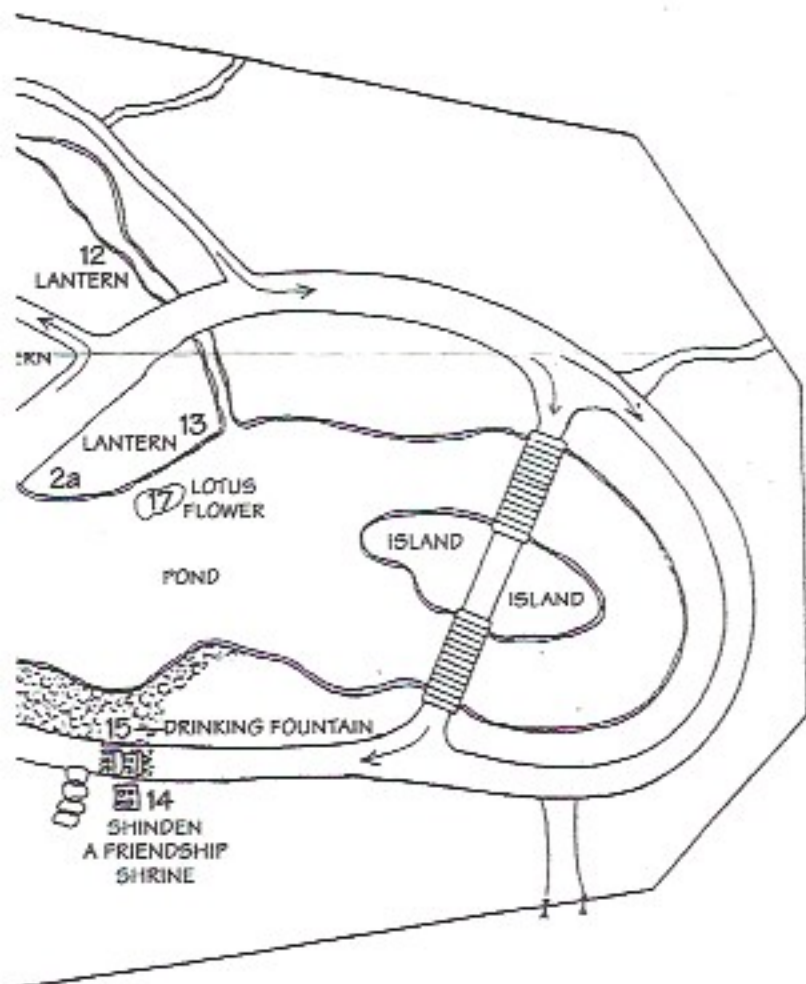
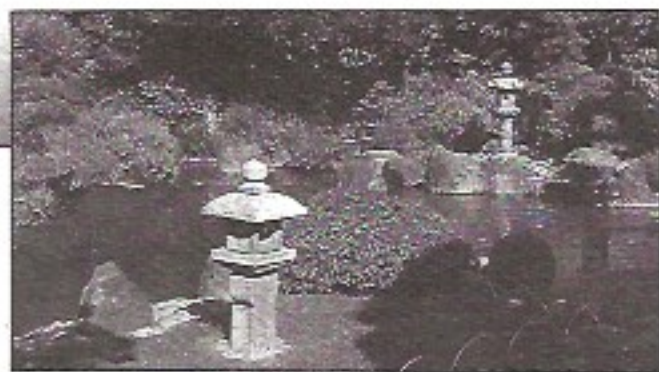
The Koi is a symbol of strength and perseverance and is a goal for character building in Japanese boys.

Koi are long lived and come in many colors. Paper carps are flown from rooftops to show presence of boy-child in the household.

7a.- Koi Feeding Stone

The curator stands on this stone and rings a bell to call forth the koi at feeding time.

A SELF GUIDED TOUR



8- Lantern: Kasuga Style

9- Waterfall #1

The tall (male) rock is on the left side with the shorter (female) rock on the right side to allow the visitor's eyes to sweep from left to right toward the pagoda.

10- Pagoda

The pagoda, a gift from our sister city Toyonaka, Japan, is placed in an elevated visible spot because it represents the centerpiece in the garden.

11- Waterfall #2

The rock arrangement of this waterfall is the opposite of the first fall. This arrangement moves the eye from right to left toward the pagoda.

Notice the placement of the other rocks that direct the flow of the water. Listen to the sound of the water as it cascades over the rocks.

12- Lantern

Mekoashi Maru-Yakimi type

13- Lantern: Takara Type

14- Shinden

This is a shrine presented to the city by the mayor of Toyonaka in 1990. It is a symbol of friendship between the two cities. The shinden was dedicated during the Japanese garden's twenty-fifth anniversary celebration in 1991.

The red lanterns next to the Shinden was a gift to the city to commemorate the thirty years of sister city affiliation. They were installed in the garden in 1994.

15- Drinking Fountain

A gift from Toyonaka.

16- Azuma-Ya (gazebo)

This is a gazebo where the visitor can enjoy a panoramic view of the garden.

17- Lotus Flower

A Buddhist flower symbolizing the fact that beauty can rise out of mud and mire. The Lotus is unique to this garden.