

Japanese Gardening: Designing a Space in Harmony with Nature

The high stress and fast pace of today's world make finding a space of tranquility almost essential. Perhaps this explains the rapidly growing popularity of Japanese gardening. Peace and tranquility are defined in Japanese gardens.

Japanese gardens have a rich historical tradition. You may be thinking of exotic plants, surreal flowers and elaborate design. However, that's not the norm. In reality, traditional version of these peaceful retreats can be relatively plain, even mundane.

The goal of a traditional Japanese garden is to mimic nature. For this reason, elaborate showplaces are actually the exception. The surrounding terrain of the local area is actually what drives the design of the garden. The space should contain whatever is required to make the garden appear natural within the neighborhood.

Japanese gardens are also known for their symbolic use of natural elements. For example, let's say you want to represent the ocean in a certain area of your garden. You could add water, but another way would be to simply represent the ocean with a area of raked rock. So now we have mimicry of the local area, blending with surroundings and use of symbolism.

What are some common elements usually found in Japanese gardens? You can count on finding rock and stone. Whether used as decorations, sitting areas, landscape elements or to surround a pond, rock and stone will be an important element. Otherwise, the basic rule of thumb for designing Japanese gardens is to use only natural materials.

Consider this: have you ever seen a square body of water occur naturally? OK, other than the Clamptt's cement pond? That's why a square pond in a Japanese garden would be out of place. Likewise, there would be no tropical flowers in a desert location. So you can begin to understand that even though Japanese gardens are built according to common rules, they actually vary quite a bit because of variations in local climate.

What you should strive to achieve in your design is a garden that looks like it occurred naturally. Want water? Fine, as long as it resembles water elements in your area. Fish? Waterfalls? Sure, why not? How about a plastic liner in your pond? Well, chances are you won't find that in nature, so that's where you draw the line.

The same thing goes for rock and stone. Of course rocks and stones exist naturally. But what about brick or square rocks stacked in a row? Or three identical rocks arranged geometrically? Probably doesn't happen in nature. Try grouping your large rocks or boulders in ways that copy natural arrangements without attempting to impose order on it.

Rock paths or stone walkways are allowed, but should follow the flow of the land. Stay away from straight lines and right angles. Allow your paths to curve and meander naturally. Then your Japanese garden successfully achieve the tranquility and harmony that we all desperately need.

About the Author

Another quality article from DIY Gardening Tips.

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