

# Symbolic meaning of the elements of Japanese gardens



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Palace garden. Gardens complemented the ensembles of the possessions of the Japanese nobility, including the Imperial family. Gardens at the Imperial palaces were - the very first gardens and were created under the influence of garden art in China and Korea. They came to Japan in the VI-VII centuries, and have not survived to our time due to internecine wars, fires, and natural disasters. In those gardens there always were an artificial lake and an island connected by a bridge to the shore.





The court nobles, accompanied by the Imperial family, spent time in the garden, rode boat, and walked along the shores of the lake. In the image and likeness of those gardens, the aristocrats began to create gardens in their estates. Borrowed from outside garden art on Japanese soil very quickly became fused with local beliefs, with a peculiar attitude of the Japanese to nature and a peculiar way of life, different from other countries. That interpenetration soon revealed a completely new art form - the art of Japanese gardens. That is how Japanese Palace and manor gardens appear.





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Temple garden. Such gardens were located on the territory of temples. Born from Zen culture, temple and monastery gardens were different from all previous gardens. They might have no plants at all, or the smallest number of them. Instead, stones, sand and pebbles became the "main characters" in the garden. So a new type - the Japanese rock garden - was born, which, along with Sakura, became the hallmark of Japan. The garden of stones is also called the symbolic garden or the philosophical garden. No other world culture has such a garden. Created at temples or monasteries, Japanese gardens were intended for contemplation.





The territory of the garden was artificially enclosed by a fence covered with clay and whitewashed. The fence could be made of bamboo, wood, or in the form of a hedge. In the fenced-off garden, as in a microcosm, there were sand, stones, sea pebbles, mosses arranged according to an elaborate composition symbolizing the Universe. The art of the rock garden arose from the conditions of life in Japan at that time - as a desire to comprehend the ideas of Zen Buddhism through solitary self-absorption, contemplation, meditation. The stone garden combines symbolism, minimalism and, at the same time, naturalness.





- For the tea ceremony the Japanese love privacy, so, such gardens were often placed in the mountains and forests. Zen culture has created another wonderful type of Japanese garden-the tea ceremony garden. It was new, not in shape, but in function. What was new in that garden was the presence of a Special tsukubai vessel for washing hands. The garden leading to the entrance to the tea house was an important component in the ceremony, preparing participants to properly tune in to the upcoming event. The aesthetics of the garden was entirely correlated with the ideals of the Tea ceremony: simplicity, modesty, low-key charm, spiritual unity of all participants in the ceremony.





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Gradually, the tea ceremony become an integral part of Japanese culture first in Buddhist monasteries as part of a ritual action, later in the court environment as a refined entertainment, then in the rest of society, in the form of meetings over a Cup of tea. The tea ceremony garden is characterized by the small size and the following parts: the path leading to the Tea house, a waiting bench where guests sit and wait for an invitation to enter the Tea house,; a hand - washing vessel-Tsukubai, a stone lantern - Oribe.

The path was paved with uneven stones, which made all visitors, regardless of the rank, watch their steps. There were also specially leveled sections of the path where visitors could stop and admire the garden. The entrance to the teahouse was very small, and everyone entering had to bend down, and those who had a sword must have left it at the threshold. All this symbolized the equality of all the guests who entered the Tea house. The style of Japanese tea gardens was finally formed in the XVI century, when the tea ceremony became an integral part of Japanese Zen Buddhist culture.







Garden at a residential building (tsubo garden). Hundreds of thousands of local residents had owned their own garden until the mass migration to multistory buildings began. That was a purely urban phenomenon. It appeared in Japan in the early middle ages due to the increasing density of the urban population and, consequently, the increasing density of buildings. The translation of the word "tsubo" is pitcher, pot, i.e., a small container, what because of the tiny space allotted to that garden among the houses. The tsubo garden is a microcosm - a small universe created in the narrow space between one's own and the neighboring house. Nowadays, such gardens are often used in interior design.











Abstract gardens. They fit seamlessly into the concept of urban parks and please with their originality. The abstract garden is similar to the tsubo garden, abstract gardens are believed to have no analogues in nature. And here a special role belongs to the viewer, who is free to mentally finish drawing an abstract garden, to be the co-author. The author of this garden is the modern sculptor Kazumasa Ohira. He created his garden from fine gravel, stones and a minimum of vegetation, calling his creation very simply - "Abstract garden".









Thanks for your attention

