



# Sustainable Landscape Designs™

*Blending artistry and ecology*

## Zen Gardening, Daly City, Saturday, 19-Sep-09, BAWSCA

The term “Zen gardening” evokes a sense of harmony in the garden and in our dry climate that means working with the natural rain cycles. Discover a type of dry Japanese gardening, called *kare sansui*, which uses rocks to symbolize water and nature in the landscape. Learn what types of California native plants are best suited to Zen gardens. See photos from the speaker’s trips to both Japan and China to learn how you can adapt this style to your own drought tolerant garden.

I. Kare sansui is a garden style unique to Japan, which appeared in the Muromachi period (1392-1568). Using neither ponds nor streams, it makes symbolic representations of natural landscapes using stone arrangements, white sand, moss and pruned trees. In *Sakuteiki* (a garden book with notes on garden making: see the notes) of the Heian period (794-1185), the term indicated a stone arrangement in a part of the garden without water. From the "Bilingual dictionary of Japanese Garden Terms"

### II. Famous Dry Gardens

#### A. Ryoan-ji

- a. Temple in Kyoto, built around 1500 A.D.
- b. The most famous of all *kare sansui* gardens

#### B. Ginkaku-ji or Silver Pavilion

- a. Zen temple at foot of Higashiyama mountains
- b. Originally a retirement villa for a shogun in late 1400s

#### C. Daisen-in

- a. Subtemple in Kyoto, main temple is Daitoku-ji
- b. Reportedly contains the most photographed rock in the world, a boat shaped rock on river of sand

#### D. Tofuku-ji

- a. Temple in Kyoto, original buildings succumbed to fire many times, but were rebuilt in early 1400s
- b. See the Southern and Eastern gardens – both are dry gardens

### IV Suitable California native plants for Zen Gardens

#### Trees

- Oaks – *Quercus lobata*, *Q. agrifolia*, *Q. kelloggii*
- Vine maple – *Acer circinatum* – replacement for Japanese maple
- Big leaf maple – *Acer macrophyllum*
- Buckeye -- *Aesculus californica*

- Elderberry – *Sambucus mexicana*
- Pacific wax myrtle - *Myrica californica*

#### Shrubs

- Western hazelnut -- *Corylus cornuta* var. *cornuta*
- Gooseberries and currants – *Ribes* spp
- Snowberry – *Symphoricarpos albus*
- Oregon grape or barberry – *Berberis aquifolium*, *B. repens*, *B. pinnata* – similar to a Japanese barberry
- Manzanita – *Arctostaphylos densiflora* ‘Howard McMinn’ or ‘Dr. Hurd’
- Coffeeberry – *Rhamnus californica* ‘Eve Case’, ‘Mound San Bruno’, ‘Leatherleaf’
- Coast silk tassel -- *Garrya elliptica*
- Nine bark -- *Physocarpus capitatus*
- Sages – *Salvia leucophylla*, *S. clevelandii*
- Wild lilac – *Ceanothus* spp.
- Sugar bush – *Rhus ovata*

#### Low plants

- California grey rush - *Juncus patens*
- Douglas’s iris - *Iris douglasiana* and Pacific Coast Hybrids
- Deer grass - *Muhlenbergia rigens*
- Fescues - *Festuca idahoensis*, *F. occidentalis*, *F. californica*
- Sticky monkeyflower – *Mimulus aurantiacus*
- Coyote bush - *Baccharis pilularis* ‘Twin Peaks’ or ‘Pigeon Point’

#### IV. References

- A. “Sakuteiki”
  - a. Oldest gardening book in the world
  - b. Written about 1000 years ago by Tachibana no Toshitsuna (1028-1094)
  - c. Definition of gardening was “setting stones upright”
  - d. See the modern translation by Jiro Takei and Marc P. Keane
- B. “A Tale of Genji” by Lady Murasaki written during the Heian period
  - a. Describes the aesthetic in the Heian period and the symbolic meaning of gardens
  - b. The word for pine is phonetically the same as the word for waiting. Perhaps this is where the term “pining” for someone comes from????
- C. “The New Zen Garden” by Joseph Cali
  - a. Very modern take on Zen gardening
- D. “Create Your Own Japanese Garden: A Practical Guide” by Motomi Oguchi
  - a. Wonderful designs and lots of detailed instructions
- E. “Japanese Garden Design” - Marc Peter Keane – good history of Japanese gardening