



CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN

ELIZABETH HUBERT MALOTT



Sansho-En

Garden of
Three Islands

SANSHO-EN GARDEN OF THREE ISLANDS

Sansho-en is a Japanese-style garden that reaches across three islands and encompasses the surrounding lake. It is a place of serene beauty, designed for quiet contemplation and appreciating nature throughout the seasons.

Dedicated in 1982, the 17-acre garden was developed to provide an opportunity for Chicago Botanic Garden visitors to experience one of the great horticultural art forms of the world without leaving the Midwest.

Journey in a Garden

Designed in the stroll style (*kaiyushiki*), Sansho-en is intended to be viewed while walking, as if on a journey. As you travel through the garden, carefully composed views unfold along a winding path. Scene after scene is revealed and then concealed, only to be rediscovered later from a different viewpoint.

A walk through Sansho-en reveals a collection of smaller gardens and classic elements from several historical Japanese garden styles. In Sansho-en you can experience contemplative dry gardens, an intimate moss garden, cool woodland gardens and a distant paradise garden, all in one visit.

The Nature of Sansho-En

True to the classical Japanese garden tradition, Sansho-en conveys a deep respect for nature although it doesn't look "natural" by Western standards. Japanese gardens are designed as stylized interpretations of the natural world. They create an ideal vision of nature by distilling and interpreting nature's lessons without copying them directly.

East Meets Midwest

The plants in this garden are chosen for their beauty, hardiness and similarity in effect to plants used in the gardens of Japan. They come from places around the world that have growing conditions similar to those of the Chicago area, including regions of Japan.

The Garden's Designer

"The purpose of a Japanese garden is to present natural forms and to create a tranquil beauty that leads visitors from everyday life to a calm, serene, reflective communion with nature." Koichi Kawana

Dr. Koichi Kawana (1930-1990) designed more than a dozen major Japanese gardens in the United States, including Seiwa-en at the Missouri Botanical Garden and Shofu-en at the Denver Botanic Gardens. He was also a professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, where he lectured on Japanese art, architecture and landscape design. Dr. Kawana continued to guide the development of Sansho-en in the years after its opening.

Design Inspiration from Sansho-En

Traditional Japanese garden design is an art form that takes years of study and practice to master. However, even home gardeners can learn valuable lessons from closely observing a Japanese garden.

As you walk through Sansho-en, observe:

- The garden's color palette—many shades of green punctuated with seasonal color.
- Patchworks of texture created by combinations of stones, plants and water.
- Asymmetrical, or off-center, arrangements of trees, shrubs, rocks, paths and lanterns.
- "Borrowed" views that incorporate the surrounding scenery into the design of the garden.
- Garden features such as lanterns, bridges and buildings made of natural materials that age beautifully.
- Trees, shrubs, grasses and ground covers that provide year-round interest.
- Open spaces framed by tree branches, tall shrubs and grasses or hills.
- Plants, lanterns, roofs and stones that catch and hold snow for winter interest.

TO LEARN MORE

Ito, Teiji. *The Gardens of Japan*. New York: Kodansha International, 1984.

Journal of Japanese Gardening. Roth Tei-en, P.O. Box 159, Dept. J, Orefield, Pa. 18069
www.rothteien.com

Keane, Marc P. *Japanese Garden Design*. Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle Publishing Co., 1996.

Yoshikawa, Isao. *Japanese Gardening in Small Spaces*. Japan Publishers, 1997

Seike, Kiyoshi and Masanobu Kudo. *A Japanese Touch for Your Garden*. New York: Kodansha International, 1980.

Yoshikawa, Isao. *Japanese Gardening in Small Spaces*. Tokyo: Joie, Inc., 1996.

An endowment has been created for the Elizabeth Hubert Malott Japanese Garden through a gift from the Malott Family Foundation. Income from the endowment will provide funds to maintain the Japanese Garden and provide programs that teach visitors about Japanese culture and history.



CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN

1000 lake cook road glencoe, illinois 60022

www.chicagobotanic.org (847) 835-5440

The Chicago Botanic Garden is owned by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County.

HIGHLIGHTS OF SANSHO-EN

- 1 Arched Bridge**

This wooden bridge symbolically marks your journey from the everyday world to a garden paradise. Its design was inspired by the elegant bridge of historic Ritsurin Park in Shikoku, Japan.
- 2 Keiunto (Island of the Auspicious Cloud)**

The first, largest and highest of Sansho-en's three islands, Keiunto serves as the focal point of the garden.
- 3 Pine Trees**

In traditional Japanese gardens, literature and paintings, pine trees often symbolize longevity and the timelessness of nature. Many of the pines throughout this garden are pruned and trained to mimic the idealized forms of aged trees.
- 4 Stone Lanterns**

Originally used to light the way to Buddhist temples, stone lanterns are used to lend beauty and a sense of age to a Japanese garden. Thirteen lanterns in classic styles are placed throughout Sansho-en.
- 5 Garden Gate**

The sophisticated style of this gate indicates that the garden beyond is large and grand. In Japanese gardens, gates are used to create physical and symbolic transitions between the outside world and hidden areas of the garden.
- 6 Dry Garden**

Gardens such as this one are sometimes called "Zen gardens" because they were often created in the courtyards of Zen Buddhist temples. The accurate name for them is *kare-san-sui*, which means "dry-mountain-water."
- 7 Arbor**

Inspired by a Buddhist temple, this arbor was constructed in Japan and features a traditional thatched, pyramid-shaped roof and an umbrella ceiling.
- 8 Rocks**

Thought of as the bones of the earth, rocks are an essential part of a Japanese garden. The rocks in this garden were chosen and placed before the plants and structures. Notice that larger rocks are partially buried to appear as if they've always been here.
- 9 Zigzag Bridge**

This modern interpretation of a farmer's humble bridge links the two islands of Keiunto and Seifuto and offers views of the Waterfall Garden and Shoin Building.
- 10 Seifuto (Island of Clear, Pure Breezes)**

Named for the gentle winds that grace the island, Seifuto features a wooded area along with wonderful views of the other two islands.
- 11 Dry Garden and Arbor House**

Contemplative dry gardens such as this one represent vast landscapes in small areas. In this garden, stones and shrubs stand for islands while the gravel symbolizes water. Patterns raked into the gravel represent waves breaking along the shoreline.
- 12 Horaijima (Island of Everlasting Happiness)**

This island represents paradise—a place inaccessible to mortals. It has no built structures and is intended to be viewed and contemplated only at a distance.
- 13 Shoin House**

Modeled on the dwellings of warriors and aristocrats of the Middle Ages, this house was built in Japan using traditional carpentry techniques. It is open for viewing, Wednesday–Sunday, 11a.m.–4p.m., mid-May through mid-October (weather permitting).

