



Tsuru Island

THE NAJGA CONFERENCE BY JAMES CARD

The North American Japanese Garden Association conference was held in Portland for the first time. This year's event had representatives participate from England, Scotland, Denmark, Japan, Australia and Canada. The largest representation from Japan and the USA. The event was held at the downtown Portland Hilton and was very well organized.

I had the pleasure of making one of the many presentations to the attendees. About 100 people were in attendance. My presentation was called "Fukkatsu, the rebirth of Tsuru Island". 7 years of stories is hard to get into 20 - 25 minutes. During the event I am reminded that every garden has a different beginning and a different reason to be developed. Refurbishment of an existing garden is a whole different story.



Kaz Kids Schedule

November 9th, 11am

March 15th, 11am

April 12, 11am

May 10th, 11am

Of course the event would have not taken place without the host organizers from the Portland Japanese Garden. Introducing the \$33 million expansion that they completed earlier this year was very interesting. They have now reached the limit of the boundaries and cannot expand any more. For visitors this means having to wait to go into the actual garden so that the overall number of visitors is kept in balance. The Portland garden now employs 120 people and a large team of volunteers while boasting 300,000 visitors annually or \$4,500,000 is gate fees.

This conference consisted of the reports on famous gardens and their beginnings; the basics of building a Japanese fishing boat; reviews of modern day gardens with massive water features and the programs that are designed to offer a peaceful place to those in need; the future of Portland Japanese garden; amongst others. Many program speakers had interpreters from English to Japanese using headsets. A tour was given of the Lebanon, Oregon Hospital garden, built by Kurisu International.

Like any event vendors were present. Some from Japan provided metal roof ornaments, finials, rain chains and gutter systems, all made of copper or bronze, and shipped from Japan.

For now I take away great memories of the people I met and topics which sparked my interest to go into the next phase at the Gresham Japanese Garden.





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Authentic Japanese Gardens

by James Card



I am not an expert on the topic of Japanese gardens and do not pretend to be all knowledgeable about the building gardens. This article comes from the knowledge gained at some of the presentations at the 2018 NAJGA conference.

Over several decades I have read books written about Japanese gardens. These books have always made me wonder about an authentic Japanese garden and rules that apply to them. This style garden originated in China and likely the influence of Zen. The dry garden had various components representing water, stone and streams. It was tranquil therapy to rake the beds with simple or elaborate designs. Small indoor gardens with interior decorations were presented on a tray or other containers. As time went on gardens developed the addition of plant materials for exterior gardens

Over time, the 11th to 19th century, garden builders started using the materials that were available. Some gardens added Japanese lanterns. Instead of lighting destinations they became ornaments. Each new development adds a different point of view or new idea or combination of ideas. Why would Japanese gardens be any different over 8 centuries or more? A builder sees a garden that was made some time ago and begins to put their own spin on the approach and the outcome of their garden. The lay of the land makes a big difference with how the garden is going to turn out and eventually appear. If the area is flat, a berm is needed. If it is not level you may have to move the soil and construct distance from the flat or build retaining walls. Gardens must have a theme, a place to enter and a place to leave. Some gardens are to be viewed from a certain place or spot like a window or an outdoor room. Most Japanese gardens are intended to resemble nature. Plants, construction materials and design can all be used to bring nature closer to man, with that comes the peace, quiet and stillness of the garden. Nature has no disasters...only change.

Gardens can also be considered to be a form of art. It is especially true of Japanese gardens that provides plants,

the position of plants, the texture, the color of the plants, and what is developed around each plant. Boulders are considered to be the foundation of the garden. The position and cut the stone is placed with such care. The stone is not just placed on the ground, it has to blend and balance with its surroundings

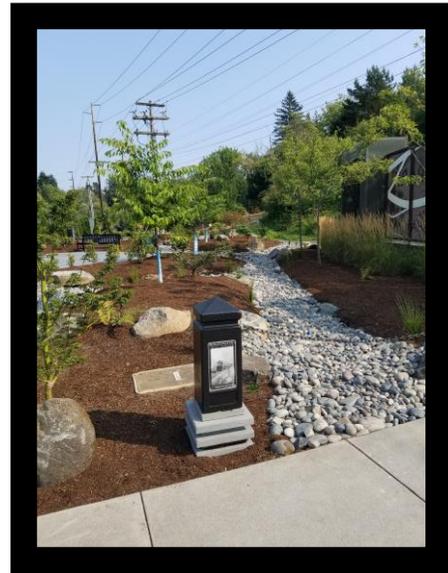
I now realize that there is no such thing as an authentic Japanese garden. In the past the "masters" made the rules and only the master could change the rule. That is not true either. There are some outstanding gardens in North America, Europe and other parts of the world, built by non-Japanese gardeners. The rules are in the vision, the talent, the experience and the heart that the builder possesses. There are some basics that all garden builders must know and understand. In Japan some of the materials were not intended to be used in a garden when first made but were adopted by the builder to fill a space, draw the eye or to perform some other function at its new home. Such an item would be a mill stone.

In the beginning of the Tsuru Island project, Tomiko and I met with a well-known and respected Japanese garden designer who is Japanese. When we asked about rules, he said to do what we felt in the area and illuminate our thoughts. We have done that and added some of the "traditional" aspects and detail to the garden that most people relate to Japanese gardens.

There are so many aspects to the Japanese Garden that have not been mentioned. Some include maples, pines, hinoki, cryptomeria, bamboo, lanterns, mill stones, gravel, grasses, moss, tea, camellia, structures, roof lines, water, bridges, borrowed landscape, the moon, Giboshi, the cherry tree and the apricot tree. Every one of them has a story and in most cases that story is long and old.

I have visited dozens of Japanese gardens in the USA and in Kyoto, Japan and I realize that some gardens were long term projects (100 years) and huge while others are small and taking less time. The maintenance is everything. In the case of Tsuru Island there is a standard that is very high. It is only because of our volunteers and those that provide us with the funds through donations that we are able to keep this standard at this level.





The Gresham Japanese Garden is being considered for weddings and wedding pictures at an increased level. Saturday, October 27th the garden hosted a wedding ceremony for John Clark's brother, Paul and bride Rhonda.

Sasha Konell, City of Gresham employee, will be assisting the volunteers to prepare for these events more efficiently in the future.

Reservation details for weddings and wedding picture are available on the web site. Greshamjapanesegarden.com

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