

Tsuru 鶴 Soars

Friends of the Gresham Japanese Garden Newsletter



A New Fence with an Old History

A significant piece of the garden gate project (see article inside) is the teppo-gaki fencing that will line both sides of the garden's entrance.

Unlike the interior fencing on Tsuru Island, bamboo consultant Mark Meenan suggested we install fresh green Moso bamboo, *Phyllostachys edulis*. Traditionally, green bamboo communicates a fresh beginning, while the Moso bamboo holds a fascinating history. It is also one of the strongest and most structurally reliable bamboo species, with thick-walled culms and a good resistance to bending and splitting.

We're excited to team up with Dain Sansome of [Bamboo Valley](#) in Canby, OR. Dain grows Moso bamboo. Almost 20 years ago Dain field-dug divisions of the original

Moso bamboo at E. A. McIlhenny's plantation on Avery Island, LA. [McIlhenny was a pioneer bamboo planter](#) in the late 19th century. His Moso grove originated from Yokohama, Japan. It's rare to find bamboo with such a remarkable history connecting Japan to the Pacific Northwest.

Bamboo Valley not only grows amazing bamboo, they also host cultural events. [Download their event flyer](#). We're thrilled to welcome Dain to our organization.

"I am excited to share our love of bamboo by bringing people together, sharing the love of a Japanese garden and nature."

— Dain Sansome, owner and operator of Bamboo Valley in Canby, OR

*a warm August day
by the ginkgo a school boy
a cricket in a cage*

— Bill Peterson



Grove of Moso bamboo at Bamboo Valley.
Inset: a teppo-gaki fence.

Peace Gardens From Hiroshima to Gresham

By Mary Dickson

Can you imagine a connection between a 406-year-old garden in Hiroshima, Japan, and the Gresham Japanese Garden, 5,205 miles away?

Shukkei-en Garden was built in 1620 by Asano Nagaakira, the first lord of the Hiroshima Asana domain, as the garden of his villa. It was designed by Ueda Soko, also known as a tea master. The garden contains a small tea garden, a medicinal herb garden, and a rice field. With ponds, hillsides, a tea house, and a variety of styles of gardens, it covers nearly 10 acres. The name “Shukkei-en” means “Shrunk Scenery Park.”

The garden has withstood fires and renovations. In 1940, it was designated a “Place of Scenic Beauty,” but in 1945, it was obliterated by the atomic bomb dropped by the US on Hiroshima, less than a mile away. Restoration began in 1949, took 30 years, and the garden remains beautiful today. Much like the Gresham Japanese Garden, it is an oasis within a city.

During my second visit, this past May, the guide showed me several trees that miraculously survived the atomic bomb blast. A ginkgo biloba now stands over 55 feet tall, with a trunk over 13 feet in circumference. It is estimated to be more

than 200 years old. Photographing it is difficult because it is amongst other large trees. There are approximately 160 *hibakujumoku*, survivor trees, still standing, 81 years after the bombing, within two kilometers of the blast zone.

A global initiative called the Green Legacy Hiroshima Project provides cities all over the world with seeds from the *hibakujumoku*. Hideko Kimura Snider, an Oregon resident who was a 10-year-old living in Hiroshima when the bomb was dropped, learned about the Green Legacy Project and founded a non-profit called the One Sunny Day Initiative to advocate for peace and nonproliferation. Part of her project is to distribute seeds of *hibakujumoku* to cities around the world. Oregon now has over 50 trees in public spaces, the highest concentration outside of Japan.

In 2021, the City of Gresham received a *hibakujumoku* ginkgo which GJG planted in September of 2022 into the newly created Peace Garden. We have applied for a grant from the Kubota Foundation which would allow us to enlarge the Peace Garden to include a karesansui, “dry landscape” garden to replace the one that will be removed in 2027 due to a major renovation of Tsuru Island.

Our *hibakujumoku* is a treasure at the Gresham Japanese Garden and links us across the ocean.

Other newsletter articles related to the Hiroshima Peace Garden:

- [December 2021](#)

- [September 2022](#)



The 200-year-old Ginkgo biloba tree that survived the bombing of Hiroshima.

September Ikebana



Euonymus alatus and Chrysanthemum

September 15th ikebana workshop focuses on chrysanthemums.

An Interpretation



In Japanese garden design, much is left to interpretation. The stream bed on Tsuru Island is a prime example. Large stones are arranged to suggest water flowing into a quiet pond, then meeting a shoreline of smaller, rounded pebbles. Wetland plants surround the stream, reinforcing the impression of water—even though the landscape is dry.

Entrance Construction



The foundation has been poured for the posts and outriggers for the roofed garden gate. Please be extra careful as you enter Tsuru Island.

Throughout this month, Tsuru Island will be closed on and off as the entrance gets completed.

The Journey Begins at the Gate

The final major project of the renovation is the completion of Tsuru Island's entrance. We could say we've saved the best—or hardest—for last. Traditional Japanese gates can be remarkably refined, even when they appear rustic. Details such as timber selection, joinery, roofing, and the treatment of the threshold demonstrate care. In traditional Japanese garden design, the gate is the transition between the ordinary world and the garden's carefully created world, so the requirements and expectations are high.

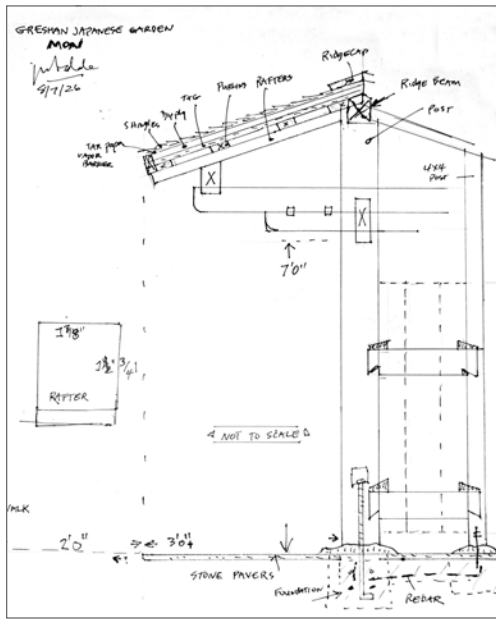


Fig 1. Profile view of the roofed garden gate by Jay van Arsdale

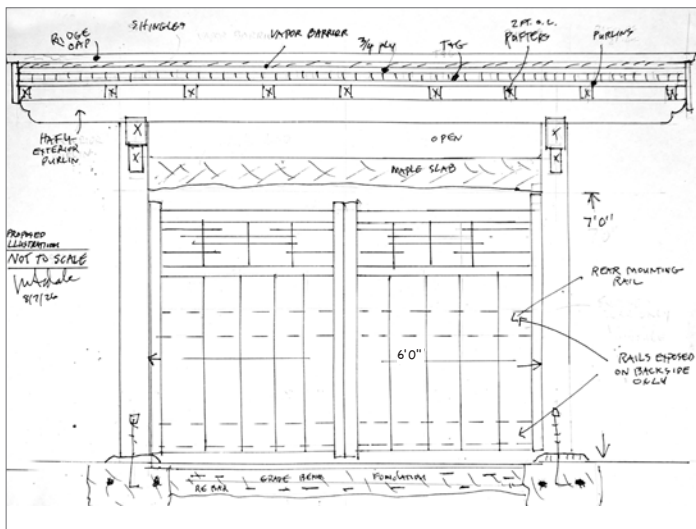


Fig 2. Conceptual drawings of the roofed garden gate by Jay van Arsdale

We are fortunate to have Jay van Arsdale, a carpenter (daiku) from Oakland, CA, leading a workshop this month to build our entrance gate. See details about the workshop here: <https://www.greshamjapanesegarden.org/garden-gate/>.

Jay has worked and taught in the Bay Area since the early '80s. He has given demonstrations, lectures, and workshops for many organizations, including the Japan Society, San Francisco Asian Art Museum, the Exploratorium, Academy of Sciences, UC Berkeley School of Architecture, North American Timber Framers Guild West Coast Conferences, and numerous national woodworking shows.

Jay is also the author of *Shoji—How to Design, Build, and Install Japanese Screens* (Kodansha, '86), *Introduction to Japanese Woodworking* (video, '87), and a contributing editor to *The Complete Japanese Joinery* (Cloudpress, '89). He has written numerous magazine articles, produced multiple instructional videos, and appeared on television in Japan and the U.S. We are extremely fortunate to have him leading this project.

Tsuru Island's roofed garden gate will be constructed from Western Red Cedar and completely hand-tooled, thanks to Jay! The gate will sit five feet back from the sidewalk and parallel to it, so visitors will not have a straight view into Tsuru Island when they enter. The concept of "hide and reveal" is very relevant to Japanese garden design. Just as lead craftsman Francheska Snyder has incorporated this concept throughout the garden, we are bringing the same idea to the entrance: miegakure (見え隠れ), or "seen and hidden."

The gate is the beginning of that journey. It creates a sense of anticipation—offering a glimpse of what lies beyond while holding something back. What lies beyond becomes something to discover.

Another reason we say we've saved the best for last is because garden gates establish the character of an entire Japanese garden. In our situation, Tsuru Island's character was established years ago by the Japanese-American Citizens League of Troutdale. They created an informal strolling garden surrounded by water, evoking an even stronger wetlands character. Through Jay's guidance, he has proposed (see Figs. 1–2) a traditionally simple roofed gate with a repurposed live-edge maple crossbeam—a natural, rustic, and beautiful touch that still preserves the garden's informal character.

On a more direct line, functionally, Tsuru Island's gate will be controlled remotely. It will open at sunrise and close at sunset. And yes, there will be a panic button to let you out!

As you've read, garden gates are not merely functional openings. Their proportions, materials, roof, joinery, boulders, fencing, and plant material all play a role. (See cover article about the tepo-gaki fencing that will line the walkway.) The garden gate frames a visitor's experience, and we hope the entrance makes your journey through Tsuru Island one you will remember.

"Creating this new gateway into the Gresham Japanese Garden is an opportunity that has brought together a group of people dedicated to learning by doing."

The good work being left behind will further enrich the community's experience of this special public space for years to come."

– Jay van Arsdale, lead daiku

Pruning Program

[Register under 'Happenings' on the website](#)



Pruning Conifers for Health and Aesthetics: Saturday, October 31, 2026, 1-3pm at Gresham Japanese Garden - \$45 This in-person, hands-on course is designed to deepen your understanding of conifer pruning through an aesthetic lens. Maryann Lewis will guide students in understanding conifer growth biology and seasonal rhythms, applying pruning techniques to maintain plant health and desired size, enhancing landscape aesthetics through thoughtful pruning, recognizing and preserving the natural form of various conifer species. *Licensed landscapers will earn 2 CEU credits.*



Structural Pruning Pines for Character: Sunday, November 15, 2026, 2-4pm on GJG's Tsuru Island - \$45 Watch Laura Dufala, owner of Bentwood Tree Farm, unlock the hidden character within pine trees. Laura will demonstrate structural pruning techniques on *Pinus thunbergii* and other pine species, guiding you toward a deeper understanding of shaping pines with character and care. *Licensed landscapers will earn 3 CEU credits.*



Upright Maple Pruning: Saturday, December 5, 2026, 12-2pm on Tsuru Island - \$45 This is an in-person instructional course with Francheska Snyder much like the weeping laceleaf maple below, but she will concentrate on a few species of upright maples on Tsuru Island. Whether you're a home gardener or a landscape professional, this course offers advanced techniques for pruning upright maples.



Weeping Laceleaf Maple Pruning: Saturday, December 19, 2026, 11am-2pm. Repeated Sunday, December 20 to finish the pruning, noon-3pm at GJG - \$55 This is an in-person instructional course with Francheska Snyder. Throughout the course, participants can engage in an open discussion with Francheska as she prunes a large laceleaf maple at GJG. Topics will include pruning techniques that create space and organize branch structure; tree health and sun exposure; managing the desired size; planning for future growth; aesthetics; and more. Whether you're a home gardener or a landscape professional, this course offers advanced techniques for pruning laceleaf maples. *Licensed landscapers will earn 5 CEU credits.*

Workshops

[Register under 'Happenings' on the website](#)

The Art of Bonsai: On the third Saturday, 1-3pm or third Thursday, 6-8pm – \$55

This project-based workshop focuses on techniques and care of a different tree each month.

Group Kobo, Sunday, September 20, 10am-1pm and Saturday, October 31, 9am-1pm

Whether you're refining a bonsai's shape, practicing wiring, or planning future enhancements, you'll receive expert guidance from GJG's bonsai master, Bobby Curtright, alongside a friendly community of fellow enthusiasts.

Introduction to Ikebana: Every second Tuesday, 1-3pm – \$50 (Except September 15 and October 6)

Each month, teacher Nana Bellerud explores the month's seasonal flowers, symbolism and seasonal meanings. Students



YOU'RE THE FIRST TO HEAR.

Autumn Illumination will transform Tsuru Island into a luminous landscape, revealing the garden's beauty after dusk. Just like Yozakura, lights will accent the garden's structures, allowing each element to emerge with quiet distinction. Join us and immerse yourself in its beauty.

