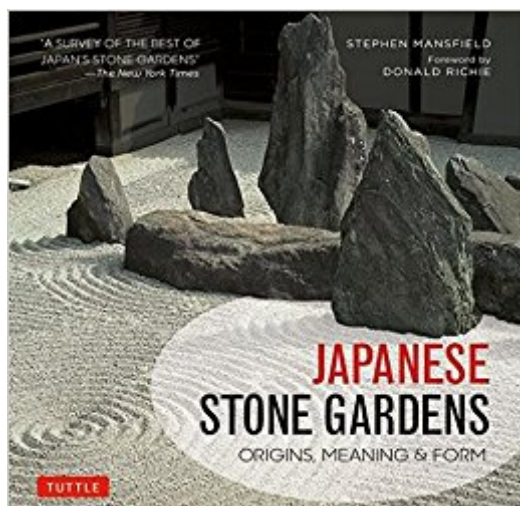


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Japanese Stone Gardens: Origins, Meaning & Form



Synopsis

Gain some new ideas along with the principles and history of Japanese stone gardening with this useful and beautiful garden design book. Japanese Stone Gardens provides a comprehensive introduction to the powerful mystique and dynamism of the Japanese stone garden—from their earliest use as props in animistic rituals, to their appropriation by Zen monks and priests to create settings conducive to contemplation and finally to their contemporary uses and meaning. With insightful text and abundant imagery, this book reveals the hidden order of stone gardens and in the process heightens the enthusiast's appreciation of them. The Japanese stone garden is an art form recognized around the globe. These meditative gardens provide tranquil settings, where visitors can shed the burdens and stresses of modern existence, satisfy an age-old yearning for solitude and repose, and experience the restorative power of art and nature. For this reason, the value of the Japanese stone garden today is arguably even greater than when many of them were created. Fifteen gardens are featured in this book: some well known, such as the famous temple gardens of Kyoto, others less so, among them gardens spread through the south of Honshu Island and the southern islands of Shikoku and Kyushu and in faraway Okinawa.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The term “stone garden” may sound like an oxymoron, but in Japan, for time out of mind, people have sensed that stones are charged with life. Considered “seats of the gods,” stones were placed in “purified” clearings that became the prototypes

for Japan's elegant dry-landscape gardens with their astonishing raked sand patterns. British-born, Japan-residing Mansfield, a versatile writer and photographer and Japanese garden expert, presents an illuminating history of this living art form in sharply focused text and image. He traces the influences of Shintoism, Taoism, and, most significantly, Zen Buddhism, and artfully delineates the aesthetics of stone, sand, and gravel arranged to embrace and transcend nature, embody impermanence and stillness, and inspire contemplation and serenity. By creating a vivid social context for the evolution of stone gardens over the centuries and portraying seminal master gardeners, Mansfield vitalizes this seemingly austere tradition. An in-depth tour of 15 masterpiece stone gardens ancient and contemporary throughout Japan further deepens our appreciation for these landscapes of aesthetic precision and meditative repose in a book as lovely and restorative as its subject. --Donna Seaman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"This survey of the best of Japan's stone gardens may send you into the sort of fugue state in which you wake up to find yourself floating through the airport, boarding pass in hand." •New York Times
"A book that will benefit both the Japanese garden enthusiast and the Zen aficionado alike. One to be dipped into time and time again and absorbed over time." •Diverse Japan

This book not only provides a detailed explanation but also beautiful photos of many interesting stone gardens throughout Japan. For other books on Japanese gardens, I recommend books by Marc P Keane (Japanese Garden Design), David and Michiko Young (The Art of the Japanese Garden), Geeta K Mehta and Kimie Tada (Japanese gardens - Tranquility, Simplicity and Harmony).

I bought this for my husband and he loves the information provided in this book, as well as the pictures!

As advertised, and fast shipping!

The book has some photos of Stone Gardens. It does not explain the origins, Meaning and Form - that is mentioned in the advertisement for the Book. The book is not useful in someone trying to build a new Stone Garden and to practice meditation etc.

Nice book on stone gardening.

The study of the Japanese Stone Garden is the study of Japanese religion. The two are as inseparable as the symbolic architecture of Catholic Cathedrals and the Bible. There are no rocks in a Japanese stone garden, but only icons of Mt. Horai, home of the immortals, or great turtles swimming in the cosmic ocean, bearing the Earth on their backs. As author Stephen Mansfield states, Japanese gardens are works of religious art. Which is why "Japanese Stone Gardens: Origins, Meanings, Forms" is much more than a guide to the garden. Mansfield does his best to give you a crash-course on Buddhism and Shinto, on why stones in particular are of importance to Japanese religion, and how those views have been shaped by contact with China and India. He takes you on a tour through the symbology of stone, showing what to look for and how to recognize certain arrangements and what their meanings are. The book is split into two sections. The first, "Introduction to the Japanese Stone Garden," takes up the bulk of the book and lays out all of the religious motifs and meanings, as well as the nature of Japanese stone gardens. He is quick to point out that the term "Zen Garden" is entirely American and has no meaning in Japan; these are gardens linked with Buddhism, but rarely with the Zen sect. He also talks about some of the standard design elements of the garden, the use of borrowed scenery and framing. I particularly enjoyed the talk on modern stone gardens, and how modern materials and techniques have shaped new gardens. The second section, "Japan's Exquisite Stone Gardens" is a picture-tour through some of Japan's most famous and beautiful stone gardens. The focus is really on imagery, although some text is provided for each photograph along with a brief history of each garden. I have been to several of these gardens, and I think the photographer did a masterful job of capturing their elusive beauty. Of course, having been to several of these gardens in real life, I also know what an illusion the photographs are. While they look like visions of serene peace, and in some distant time they must have been, now they are loud, rambunctious places packed with tourists and all the support industries of food hawkers and souvenir stands. I would love to see the Ryoan-ji pictured here, austere and unembellished. In real life, your attempts to contemplate the stones are interrupted by jostling crowds and blaring loudspeakers that give a pre-recorded history of the temple and the garden nonstop. And that is really the only complaint I have against this book (and books of this kind). While the author does mention the reality of crowds and noise in the text, I would have loved to have seen a picture of these gardens packed with tourists and sellers as they are in real life. Because anyone going to Japan seeking the serenity they find in this book will be sorely disappointed.

Of an old-fashioned bent, a Luddite at heart, I bemoan the shift in publishing from print to screen. A

book should comprise ink and paper between covers. Its pages can be dog-eared, turned with a moistened thumb, scribbled on--indeed, the marginalia becomes part of the book. "Japanese Stone Gardens," then, is a book that reassures; for no e-book could duly reproduce Stephen Mansfield's photographs stretching across facing pages of a book whose design draws on the beauty of empty but expressive space as do the gardens it pictures. Which is not to imply the author-photographer is concerned only with the big picture of these gardens; his lens can be pointillist, resting on pebbles beneath temple eaves, a pair of straw sandals on a "shoe-removing stone," the shadow of an iron lantern cast on a reed shutter. His palette encompasses not only the gray hues of stone but also a variety of greens, for he opens our eyes to the breadth of the dry landscape garden, which can even embrace topiary. Indeed Mansfield points out that despite the rules laid down in hoary gardening manuals of centuries past, the stone garden continues to evolve and is "well suited to the bleak urban settings of today's cities, the hard textures and surfaces of buildings, the towering skyscrapers that lend themselves as the new 'borrowed scenery' in place of mountains and jagged cliffs." He credits Mirei Shigemori with liberating the stone garden from the dead hand of the professional gardeners who came into dominance in the Edo Period. Such liberation is apparent in Shigemori's garden at Kishiwada Castle in Osaka--a mandala of bluish stone and raked sand, visible from the top of the castle donjon. Following an explanation of the form and meaning of the stone garden, the book's second half is a Baedeker to the best examples complete with a helpful map indicating their locations from Tokyo to Okinawa. Some (e.g. Ryoan-ji) will be familiar, most will not, wherein the added value of this series of fourteen photo essays transporting the reader to tranquil gardens off the beaten path. "Japanese Stone Gardens" adds a fresh dimension to a visit to Japan's cultural wonders; most of the dry landscapes Mansfield introduces are situated at favorite destinations. This book is no vade mecum, being too large for a pocket. Having been inspired by its luscious photographs, you should leave it in your hotel room and head for a stone garden. You will be mesmerized and bewitched. Indeed, stone gardens, in Mansfield's words, induce hallucinations and tranquility. Likewise this beautiful volume.

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