

**Spring 2026 Arts of Asia Lecture Series**  
**Asia Reimagined: Mapping Cultures Beyond Borders**  
**Sponsored by the Society for Asian Art**

**A History of Japanese-Style Gardens in North America:  
The View from San Francisco**

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**March 20, 2026**

**Key Ideas:** Modern Japanese Gardens in America not as a subset of pre-modern gardens in Japan, but as a distinctive type of modern North American garden that tells how North Americans have wanted to construct Japan literally and figuratively, and how Japanese have wanted their culture to be viewed. Embrace gardens as part of our history, and the history of transnational cultural exchange. They are about cultural adaptation, and also about finding universal meanings.

**Organization:** Japanese-style gardens as

1. Collections of Plants (horticultural imports)
2. A Nation to Experience (world's fair political symbols)
3. Wonders to Behold (commercial places)
4. Things to Own & Display (residential extravagances)
5. Paths to Empowerment (feminine spaces)
6. Means of Identity & Employment (Japanese American connections)
7. Points of Pride (sister city & cultural institutions)
8. Dynamic Social Spaces (gardens as wellness sites)

**Goal:** Shift from Japanese gardens microcosms of Japan to Japanese-style gardens as microcosms of nature that adapt ideas evolved in Japan. Need to foster gardens in ways that increase their social utility to ensure sustainability and value by return gardens to the core values that propelled the art form over centuries.

**Select Readings**

Brown, Kendall. *Visionary Landscapes: Japanese Garden Design in North America, The Work of Five Contemporary Masters* (Periplus, 2017)

Brown, Kendall. *Quiet Beauty: The Japanese Gardens of North America* (Tuttle, 2013; rev. 2024)

Brown, Kendall. *Japanese-style Gardens of the Pacific West Coast* (Rizzoli, 1999).

Keane, Marc. *Japanese Garden Design* (Tuttle, 1996)

Keane, Marc. *Japanese Garden Notes: A Visual Guide* (Stone Bridge, 2017)

Kuitert, Wybe. *Japanese Gardens and Landscapes, 1650-1950* (Penn, 2022)

Tagsold, Christian. *Spaces in Translation. Japanese Gardens and the West* (Penn, 2017)