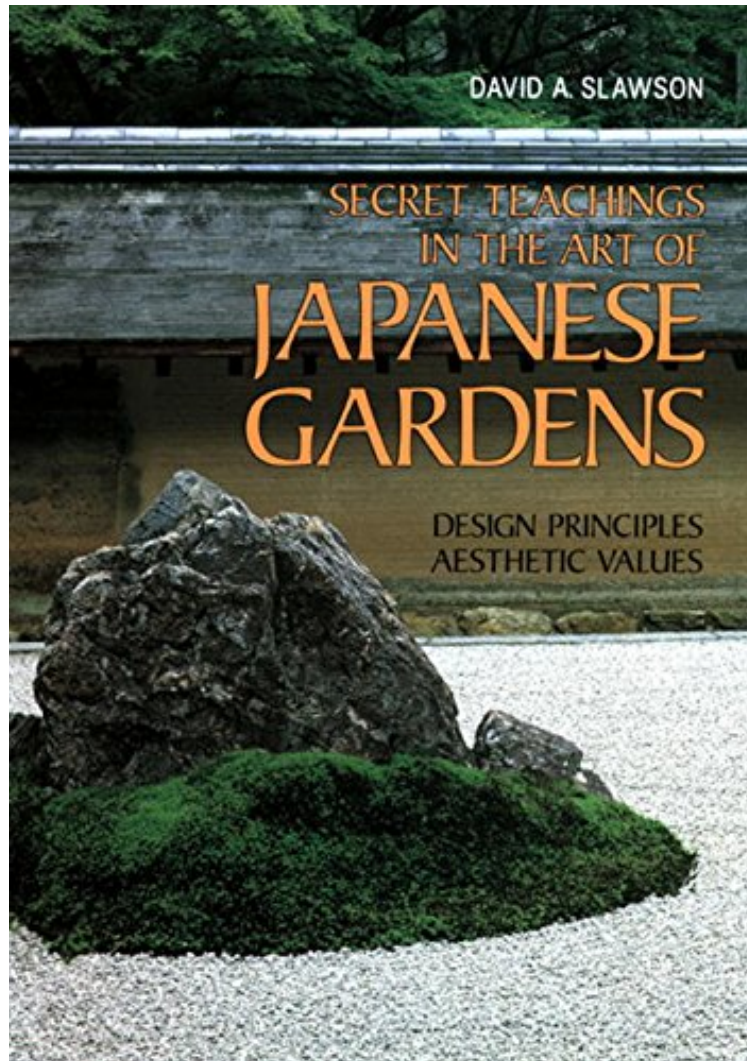


Secret Teachings in the Art of Japanese Gardens: Design Principles, Aesthetic Values

David A. Slawson

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before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Secret Teachings in the Art of Japanese Gardens: Design Principles, Aesthetic Values:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. On the path to know more about the secret teaching in the art of Japanese gardens By MichaelInSeattle I have only begun to plumb the depths of this book. Being new to Japanese gardening I have spent considerable time on the sections of this book that describe the transmission of the art including a description of the historical learning process and suggestions on how to "Make it your own" in appendix 4. I found

the description of Fuzei and the shift from more feature oriented to quality oriented landscape captivating. (Though I am still working to understand it). The Sensory effects area of the book is helping start to develop insights into how to see the garden from different perspectives including framing, rhythm and spatial quality with depth cues and atmospheric effects. Another wonderful resource this book has is a translation of Illustrations for Designing Mountain, Water, and Hillside Field landscapes by Zoen. Much there in terms of stone meaning, arrangements, taboos. Seeing the distillation of landscapes into single stone, stone arrangements, and layout suggestions for an entire garden design. Although much of this applies to the gardens of the era, I have always felt the need to understand 'why' as much or more than 'how'. I felt this book helped educate me on the path. To know more about the secret teaching in the art of Japanese gardens...117 of 117 people found the following review helpful. An invaluable and in-depth resource By Douglas I have, over the years, collected a number of books on the art of Japanese Gardens. Most rely on glossy photos and provide very little written content on the complexities of Japanese garden composition. What sets this work apart is its depth and focus on unraveling the underlying design principles and its intent on providing a deeper understanding into the art of Japanese gardening. If you were looking for a purely visual reference I would advise you not purchase this book. If however you were searching for a scholarly study in the design aesthetics of Japanese gardens, I would give this book my strongest recommendation. Slawson begins with his experiences as a master gardener's apprentice in Japan and ends with a full translation of an ancient gardening manual used by Buddhist monks. Each page overflows with background, details and inspiration. He urges and inspires you not to transplant an existing garden design, but gives the reader the foundation to evolve a plan reflective of your own individual location and taste. By clearly dissecting the aesthetic principal behind Japanese garden design, the book succeeds in creating a truly inspirational guide. Have a highlighter and note pad ready from the first page of the acknowledgements to the comprehensive bibliography.67 of 68 people found the following review helpful. Inspiration and perspiration for an aspiring garden designer By Mico Loretan Of all the books we consulted, read, and reread before we began to design and create our own Japanese-style garden -- really, just a small front yard of a rowhouse on a pretty street on Capitol Hill -- Slawson's book was the most useful. Why? Not because it's easy reading! Understanding what the author is trying to say requires careful and slow reading (and rereading) of almost every sentence. It's effort well spent! Unlike so many pretty-picture books about Japanese garden design, which amaze the reader with their photos but leave him/her dumbfounded as to how one would go about designing a garden from scratch (as opposed to merely copying some handsome garden pictured on one of the book's pages!), Slawson's book unlocks -- to the persistent reader -- the fundamentals (secrets, if you insist) of what makes a garden Japanese. As the preceding reviewer already pointed out, this essentially boils down to being able to express one's own experience and impression of nature. Once you're at this stage, the selection of rocks and other materials and their harmonious placement in the space at hand, is almost a piece of cake. (OK, it's still a lot of work to implement one's design, but at least you know what you're supposed to be doing!) In case you're wondering about the outcome of our design effort: we've gotten lots of praise from neighbors and from total strangers, from American and from Japanese friends, for our little Japanese-style rock garden. And everybody who looks at our front yard gets what we were trying to express artistically! I have no doubts that we could never had this type of success without having had access to Slawson's remarkable book.

The art of the Japanese garden is a 1,500-year-old landscape design tradition that is still evolving, still instructive. Secret Teachings in the Art of Japanese Gardens explains the fundamental principles of this tradition and describes how those principles may be applied to a much wider range of environments than exists in Japan. In the first section the author draws on his own experience as an apprentice to a master gardener in Kyoto, as well as his considerable knowledge of Japanese classical texts, to present the garden design process in terms of three primary aesthetic considerations: Scenic effects-reproductions of appealing natural landscape forms. Sensory effects-varieties of scale, framing, rhythm, motion, and spatial quality. Cultural effects-the incorporation of allusions to classical literature, poetry, and painting. The final section comprises a complete translation of a classic gardening manual used by Buddhist monks in medieval Japan. Its rules for planting trees and setting rocks still make good design sense today, and the author includes numerous garden descriptions as examples of how ancient masters practiced their craft. This clear, authoritative work, fully illustrated with diagrams and photographs, elucidates much about the Japanese compositional sense. But at the same time it is a plea for a more holistic approach to landscape design-a recognition that a garden should conform to certain natural principles as well as meet the emotional needs of those who view it.

"Truly a remarkable book; nominally a garden book, it is also a design manual, a study of Japanese aesthetics." - Choice About the Author DAVID A. SLAWSON studied under noted designer Kinsaku Nakane in Kyoto. He received his Ph.D. in Japanese aesthetics and landscape garden design from Indiana University in 1985; he presently designs gardens for private residences and public buildings, and he has taught at Carleton College in Minnesota and the Harvard University Graduate School of Design.