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# NAJGA In Focus

*Horticulture. Business Culture. Human Culture.*

## NEWSLETTER - Summer 2014

### NAJGA and UK's Japanese Garden Society forge trans-Atlantic connection

A bridge is a symbolic human artifact in a Japanese garden, and is an apt metaphor for a new connection that spans a whole ocean between NAJGA and the Japanese Garden Society (JGS), an organization that has been promoting Japanese garden culture in the United Kingdom for the last 20 years.



*The JGS logo*

The two organizations recently signed an affiliation agreement to advance Japanese gardens in research and practice in the

### GARDEN JOURNEYS

### Chicago by way of England



*By Benjamin Carroll,  
Horticulturist*

Geoff Hamilton, host of the long-running BBC program "Gardener's World" became a horticultural hero of mine when I first got a fantastic opportunity to have a summer job in the United Kingdom. He had a way of making the viewer feel like anyone can do it, taking out the scare factor in gardening. I even applied in Uncle Geoff's alma mater Writtle College, and to my joy and surprise, I was admitted

international arena and to enhance international understanding of Japanese gardens' contribution to society. This will be done through cooperative efforts between members, exchange of publications, among others.

"I'm excited with the prospect of building relations with NAJGA members who share our commitment to preserve and promote Japanese culture," says JGS Chairman Anthony Austin. "A wide range of wonderful Japanese gardens blesses North America. We have a lot to share and learn from each other."

NAJGA Executive Director Diana Larowe looks forward to broadening NAJGA's outreach and tapping into an even bigger pool of international knowledge in Japanese gardening. "UK, US and Canada share very similar pathways in the history of designing and building Japanese gardens in their native soil. Possibilities for sharing best practices and collaborative research are endless," she said, adding that the presence of JGS honorary Vice-President Graham Hardman as a speaker at the 2014 NAJGA conference bodes a promising start to this collaboration.

visions of paradise 楽園への憧憬  
the japanese garden in the uk



*A catalogue from JGS' "Visions of Paradise" showcasing gardens in Japan and the UK.*

JGS members are involved in a wide range of activities: supporting and visiting local Japanese gardens, building new Japanese-style gardens and running programs related to Japanese garden arts. Its diverse membership range from garden designers and builders, homeowners seeking advice on garden conservation, and garden visitors who wish to better understand what they're viewing.

JGS is the third international organization to partner with NAJGA since its inception. A similar affiliation agreement has been forged with the Academic Society of Japanese Gardens and the Garden Society of Japan.

into their Bachelor's degree program. My experience in this garden-loving country also included training at the Cambridge University Botanic Garden.

After five years in the UK, I joined the Chicago Botanic Garden and was in charge of the beautiful Elizabeth Hubert Mallott - Sansho-en Japanese garden. From the time I managed Sansho-en, I have been very interested in plant selection for Japanese gardens outside Japan. Who would think, for example, that a Mediterranean plant like the rosemary could be used as a mounded shrub?

For the trained pine trees in Sansho-en, designer Koichi Kawana uses *Pinus sylvestris* (Scots pine) instead of the more traditional *Pinus thunbergii* (Japanese Black Pine).



*The Sansho-en at the Chicago Botanic Garden will be one of the four Japanese gardens to be featured in the Chicago area for the 2014 NAJGA conference.*

For the *karikomi*, Koichi cleverly chose the boxwood instead of the small-leaf azalea used in Japan. Designers must indeed be very creative in finding plants that will

## Bringing British Japanese garden history to North American audience



**Garden historian Dr. Jill Raggett has spent over two decades finding the Japanese garden connection in the gardens of her native Great Britain and in Ireland. She credits the UK Japanese Garden Society for helping kindle the fire that has become her main research interest for so long.**

"I have witnessed how the JGS has continued to enhance awareness of Japanese gardens as a rich source of design philosophy and historical reference, and at the same time, raise the profile of the Japanese-style garden," she wrote in the 20th year anniversary issue of the JGS journal "*Shakkei*" (borrowed landscape).

Jill has taken her notions of the borrowed (cultural) landscape over to the other side of the Atlantic. In the NAJGA conference held in Denver two years ago, she introduced North American audiences to Japanese-style gardens that emerged in Britain and Ireland at the turn of the 20th century, as well as to the lives and legacies of early Japanese garden designers working in that part of the world at that time. (She got acquainted in turn with the American "art form" known as line dancing). She heralded the new partnership between NAJGA and JGS with a hand-carried congratulatory message from JGS during the 2012 conference.

For the 2014 conference, Jill will dive deeper into the topic of garden designers from an earlier time by focusing on the life of Handa Taki, a courageous Japanese woman who worked as a teacher, horticulturist and "serendipitous" garden designer in the British Isles during the 20th century.

grow in climates and soil conditions that are different from Japan, while still meeting the aesthetic needs of a Japanese garden.

As someone who earned his gardening chops in the UK and is aware of the challenges of creating a Japanese garden in a foreign soil, I think it is wonderful that NAJGA has developed an affiliation with UK's JGS. The society seems to be on a similar path and is a natural fit for NAJGA.

### Welcome new members!

- AL BENNER - Moss Acres
- BONNIE CLARK - University of Denver
- GRANT FOERSTER - Aesthetic Pruners Association
- RAE GEREN
- LINDA & JOHN HOESCHLER
- KOICHI KOBAYASHI - Seattle Japanese Garden Society
- BETTY KOEHN - Kurisu LLC
- LYNN KOEHN - Kurisu LLC
- LINDA MATHEWS - Santa Barbara Botanic Garden & Shinkanana Tea House
- COLE MICHAEL
- MIZUHO MINAMIZAKI
- HIROKAZU OKUSA
- BILL RAUCH
- ELIZABETH RAUCH
- HIROSHI SAKAGUCHI
- JOSH SMITH
- MARGO TERRY

# An Anglo-Japanese *Osmosis* in California Wine Country

An overseas friendship started 30 years ago between a young Californian and a young Englishman who both found themselves under the spell of Kyoto's classic gardens has led to a collaboration that offers the Japanese garden experience in a context both old and new: as part of a healing environment that also serves a commercial clientele.



*Robert Ketchell and Michael Stusser*

The Californian is Michael Stusser, the founder of *Osmosis Day Spa Sanctuary*, a Japanese-style retreat in California's Sonoma County wine region. The Briton is Robert Ketchell, who went on to become a founding member of UK's Japanese Garden Society, building a career as a Japanese garden designer and builder in England.

It would take another 17 years after their Kyoto encounter before Michael and Robert would build the garden that they both dreamt of creating in California as young garden sojourners in Kyoto. After spending some time as a landscape garden apprentice in Kyoto, the path to garden creation meandered somewhat for Michael. He became absorbed in creating and operating *Osmosis*, a shift in focus that was helped along by another major epiphany he had in Japan. Suffering from a painful case of sciatica, he became a devotee of the Japanese cedar enzyme bath, a rejuvenating heat treatment that provided the best relief for his condition and would eventually become the signature offering of *Osmosis*.

## ***The Garden of the Ox and His Herder***

Just like a winding path in a Japanese garden, Michael's meandering way to building his garden was a moment-by-moment revelation. In 2000, the revelation came in the way of reconnecting with Robert through a fluke, just as Michael was reviving his vision of creating a Japanese garden. Robert would be traveling from England to California for the next four years to create a meditation garden in the spa's premises whose purpose is to deepen the experience of peace and tranquility for the spa's guests.

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The *Garden of the Ox and His Herder* is based on a Zen Buddhist parable that is a metaphor for the process of enlightenment, with the elusive Ox symbolizing one's true nature. Michael describes Robert as "extremely talented in probing the esoteric meaning of rocks in the Japanese garden." With all ten stages of the parable represented in the garden -- many of them as rock-focused vignettes -- Robert had ample opportunity to exercise his talent. He spent 18 months looking for the right kind of rock material to embody the Ox and the Herder in their different stages and to embody cultural concepts such as longevity, good fortune and guardian spirits that are often incorporated in Japanese garden settings.

Aside from this meditation garden, the spa also has five other gardens in the premises, including a Japanese-style Tea Garden which welcomes visitors in the spirit of the Japanese tea ceremony, and the Zen Garden, which can be viewed by visitors soaking in the cedar enzyme baths.

Find out more at: [www.osmosis.com](http://www.osmosis.com)

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