

Japanese Work Bursary Report – thanks to Merlin Trust Bursary Fund

Japanese work bursary | Alex Beata Clarke | 19/02/2017 - 05/03/2017

Bursary - £542 RHS Coke Trust - £540 Merlin Trust = £1082

Plane flights cost £842.07, Insurance for flight £30, Return train to Kyoto £143, Pasmto metro card £50 Bus in Kyoto £7 Entrance fees £25 = £1097

I paid for food, hotel in Kyoto, gifts = £291

Contents|

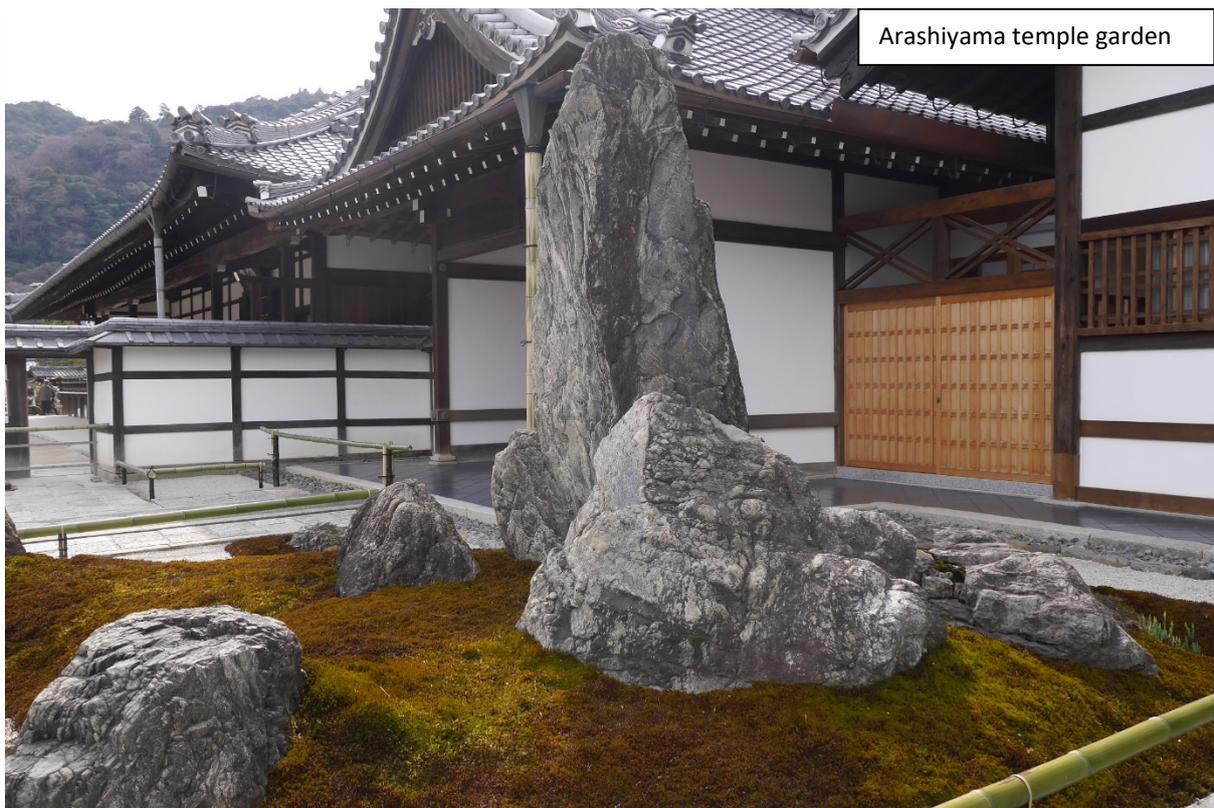
-Aim Page 2

-Objectives Page 2

-Itinerary Page 3 – Page 28

-Overview Page 29

-Bibliography Page 29



Aim | Working at a Japanese family's plant nursery and travelling to see and experience Zen Buddhist gardens in Tokyo and Kyoto

Objectives |

- I hope to achieve a more varied understanding and knowledge of plants that grow in different climates and locations.
- I hope to gain a greater amount of skill and technique within a plant nursery environment by working alongside a long time established Japanese plant business.
- I also hope to see some of the more traditional Japanese Gardens and Parks in Kyoto and around Tokyo, such as Rikugien, Mukojima-Hyakkaen, to gain a better understanding of the Japanese approach to gardening which involves the concept of representing the wider landscape and achieving a spiritual quality to a designed space.
- I would hope to see alternative compositions for providing colour and interest in gardens and parks throughout early Spring.
- I would hope to share this knowledge and experience with the garden I work in next when I finish my HBGPT placement at Trentham Gardens and hopefully secure another assistant gardener job in a historical or artistic garden setting. In this way, I would hope to bring to the team my learnt plant care techniques and experience of gardening in relation to another culture and climate.
- I would also like to share my knowledge and experience as I continue to work towards achieving the design aspect of the rhs level 2 diploma, in so far as practising designing zen type gardens that would provide a sense of calm and tranquillity to the viewer and visitor.
- I would hope that after visiting in Spring, I could at some point also visit in Summer to see the differences and to make a journey to see and explore the Tokachi Millennium Forest Garden in Hokkaido designed by Garden Designer Dan Pearson. I have admired his natural and instinctive approach to plant design for a long time and hope to visit more gardens designed by him and his team. This Forest Garden would combine my passions for his work, for the Japanese approach to gardening, and for the chance to see more woodland style gardens.
- It is one of my future aims to explore more gardens that place a strong emphasis on naturalistic, plant-led planting by both Dan Pearson and Piet Oudolf who I have also been lucky enough to research into both during my Masters in Landscape Architecture and as HBGPT student at Trentham Gardens, that holds a design called the Floral Labyrinth and Rivers of Grass by Piet Oudolf. In this way, I would be developing a stronger style that I could hope to share with other gardeners and artists alike.
- I would also hope to share my experience of working in a different country and with a different culture in so far as representing some of the Japanese traditions in garden designs. I would also like to share that knowledge of designing to form a cohesive identity for the people within a community via gardening by drawing on what is culturally significant within their hinterland.
- I also hope to use this experience of gardens and nursery work in Japan to inform my second HBGPT project at Trentham, as I am putting together a hand drawn, botanical leaflet on Japanese herbs and attempting to grow them in our kitchen garden at work.
- Furthermore, I would like to share my experience by perhaps visiting or working in another garden that is within a different country or culture.

Itinerary|

-Week 23

19/02/2017 Travelled from Heathrow to Haneda

20/02/2017 Manami met me and we planned the travel for that day, setting out from the airport at around nine.

We took the train to Shinagawa and changed for the busy, shopping district of Shibuya station. It is a major business commuter and tourist area. There are also a lot of young people or university students meeting here. It is around twenty minutes from where Manami works so it was helpful that she could show me most of the way to the garden I was going to see and observe. I just had to take the train for one stop on the brown, Fukotoshin line to Meiji jingumae station and then walk across the railway bridge to Yoyogi Park.



Yoyogi Shrine Gate

Yoyogi Park

A very large, public, woodland, shrine park. It is a working shrine – Meiji Jingu, where monks pray, weddings are held as well as holy events and they are also making money for the upkeep of the sacred gates and the temple buildings.

This is achieved by asking for donations as visitors pay to pray at the temple, as they pay to pray at the twin, ancient, marriage trees, by offering the chance to write a message token that chimes in the breeze, by providing restaurants and asking for payment to enter the Inner Temple Garden.

To enter the temple square, you wash clean your hands and mouth with holy water. This cleanses you and encourages peaceful thoughts.

The woodland park contains monochromatic shades of grey, green and brown which is visually calming.

There are elaborate shadows and shimmers on the ponds which add to the higher awareness of light and nature. *Phyllostachys*, *Dryopteris*, *Fatsia*, *Luzula*, *Iris* and *Azalea* rattle to a crescendo in the wind. Especially the *Sasa veitchii*.

Old, damaged, rotting, gnarled trees are left close to the pathways.

There is a consciousness of water with rills of wide drainage channels running to the edge of the wide walkway which gives you a wonderful sense of space. Smaller paved paths run on top of the small grey gravel to allow for more direction and smoother footfall if wished.

Meiji Jingu Inner Garden

The Inner Garden is an Edo Period Design made up of 83 000 m² – it is again peaceful and has inspired poetry. There are various sensual highlights due to the planting involved throughout the seasons. The early *Prunus mume* blossom was just into flower which was lovely too see against the monochromatic and green backdrop.

In this garden, there is a tea house, reflective well that feeds an Iris lake, including: *Iris 'Ozara'*, an *Azalea* walk, stylized bonsai trees and a curved path walk which leads to a large, fishing pond that captures the light shimmers when the wind speeds up in the ripples.



Day 1 (Finance)

Pasmo card 5000 yen

300 yen rice beef curry

600 yen iced green tea

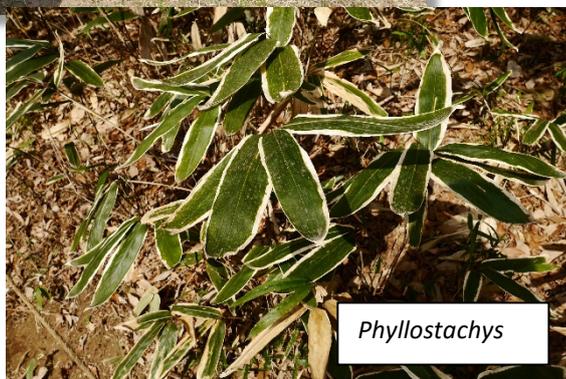
500 yen wooden prayer

500 yen to enter Inner Garden

300 yen locker

151 yen tissues

890 yen coffee and sandwich



3000 yen taxi

2000 yen Toothbrush, water, pancake

21/02/2017 Rikugien Gardens

A wealthy, business family invited a garden designer to create an extra park for their vast estate; to be used for leisure and relaxation. The garden designer based a great number of viewpoints in the garden on famous, Edo poems and odes to beauty. It is now a public park which still holds large gathering areas amongst the *Prunus serrulata* trees.

Now, (mid-February) the bright pink Ume *Prunus mume* blossom is out.

The designed, rocky, mountainous landscape feature in the middle of the lake, which the visitor first walks to, stands out distinctly.

Although it is more barren in the planted beds at this time of the year, the small *Pinus mugo*, tall *Phyllostachys* structures and variegated undergrowth are determined features in the landscape of the garden.

The *Phyllostachys* are especially entertaining to the senses as they seem to start the sound of chattering which appears to be a prominent aspect of Japanese woodland gardens – the plants sounds as though they are engaged in a roaring conversation in the wind. It does make you feel a lot more connected to nature, and its sensory, spiritual soundscapes. This is significant as a sharp contrast to the harsher manmade materials and use of technology in high rise cities, such as Tokyo.





Phyllostachys and pathway shapes

Ueno Park

This park seems to be a base, meeting point and passage way for the busy workers and students of Tokyo.

A museum quarter, hosting both East and West artwork and historical collections. A grand, placed square with wide paths throughout - banked by *Prunus serrulata* and *Camellia*.

Camellia are believed to signify a loss of motivation, due to the way in which their flowers fall off in full when they are finished, and lie in a desolate manner along the pathways.

A *Paeonia* collection sits within, as well as a zoo, art center and library.



Paeonia

It is quite eclectic, but considering its use as a site for mixed activities the layout seems to suit it as a public place. Also, the wide roadways must hold a greater significance as a meeting point during the Hamami cherry blossom festival.



Day 2 (Finance)

20 000 yen r train to Kyoto

530 yen sandwich and coffee

720 yen cake and tea

163 yen lemonade

300'yen enter Rikugien

22/02/2017 East Imperial Gardens close to Takabashi Station

A vast public space for workers to take a break in, run around the perimeter, or wander through introducing clients to the area.

It is split into distinct areas.

- Honmaru: The main castle is surrounded by large lawns with *Prunus* blossom and *Phyllostachys* of many kinds.



- This leads into some classic orchard collections, housing Japanese *Pyrus*, *Prunus mume* 'Omoi no mama', *Diospyros*, *Prunus serrulata*, *Malus*, *Citrus* and *Prunus armeniaca*.



orchard collections



There are also some wilder zones with a mix of trees, grasses and meadow flowers e.g. *Adonis amurensis*.

- Ninomaru: This space seems to be more secluded, as opposed to expansive. It is supposed to reflect upon the habitat of a well-respected woodland that used to thrive on the outskirts of Tokyo.
- Again, there are water-loving *Iris* readily labeled and planted for late Spring and Summer. These dried out pools are surrounded by *Camellia x hiemalis* and *Myrtus* hedges, set within dried, yellow lawns.
- There is also a scattered woodland effect and bamboo stake bridges highlighted by lone *Prunus mume* trees.
- This is noticeable as you look across the entire garden, as it still manages to express a natural message with a calming effect.
- It is visually pleasing and not overwhelming in its contrast of ordered shapes and colours, despite following a known style layout.



Prunus mume



Camellia x hiemalis

Mikujima hyakaen Flower Garden



Prunus mume

This smaller garden was in contrast to the parks due to its smaller scale. This contrast gave it a different quality; with a much more local community appeal. A treasure within a fairly stark, built up, urban district.

It was lovely to actually see some gardeners working up close – preparing a newly cultivated patch, tending to a group of *Raphanus sativus* var. *Longipinnatus* planted inside a wooden circle, cleaning a path with a rake, filling the pond and lifting up debris from the water.



Raphanus sativus var. *Longipinnatus*

It does seem that for gardeners of the more traditional, stylized, Japanese gardens, late Winter/ early Spring is the time for reconstructing and repairing the ponds in readiness for when they have a far greater influence on the garden – such as with *Iris* displays in Summer.

This task relates to our repetitive, long time work in the *Iris* patches in the Italian Garden at Trentham.

With the pond gardens, it seems as though a choice is made to temporarily sacrifice the general aesthetic in Winter by digging up and laying bare the ponds so that the water features can be prepared to highlight the flower displays in warmer seasons.

Even, in this smaller garden there were mini diggers being utilized to shift sand and soil for reconstructing the boundaries, levels and pond depths.

In Yoyogi Park, and in the East Imperial Garden, the ponds largely appeared to be entirely drained, with just hundreds of positioned *Iris* labels. I do wonder if the controlling of the water flow (especially with water playing such an honored, sensory role in Japanese gardens) follows this cycle every year, or whether this is due to drought or weather conditions being factored in.

It seemed as if in Mikujima hyakaen and in Rikugien that the gardeners, contactors and engineers were in fact starting to refill these ponds with water.

Also, Mikujima certainly had the *Prunus mume* in full flower as the key viewing interest, with several shades of white, light pink, bright pink and a darker pink on quite old and gnarled trees. It appears that the pruning of fruit trees for blossom in this country is expert and well-practiced.

There were some remaining colour highlights in the garden from the *Hammamelis molis* and *Chimonanthus praecox* as well.



The Flower Garden, as it is termed, is situated surrounded by residential buildings on three sides and a main road, close to the metro, to the front of it. There were young, school children using the paving leading up to the garden entrance as a play area for after school time. Presumably, their parents can keep an eye on them from houses nearby. It felt like a community gathering point, and a point of reference for the area for walking and cycling between zones.

Day 3 (Finance)

1000 yen art gallery entrance

170 yen coffee

700 yen water and sandwich

150 yen hyakaen entrance

760 yen cake and green latte

1000 sushi

23/02/2017 Hama Rikyu Gardens, Shiodome



Fantastic, Edo - remembering garden in the heart of Tokyo. An excellent chance for workers and tourists alike to find some fresh air and natural escapism.

The 'Beach Palace' of feudal lords – originally a key site due to being positioned by the Tokyo Sumida River which transported goods from Kyoto and Nagasaki. This natural waterway and underlying layer of

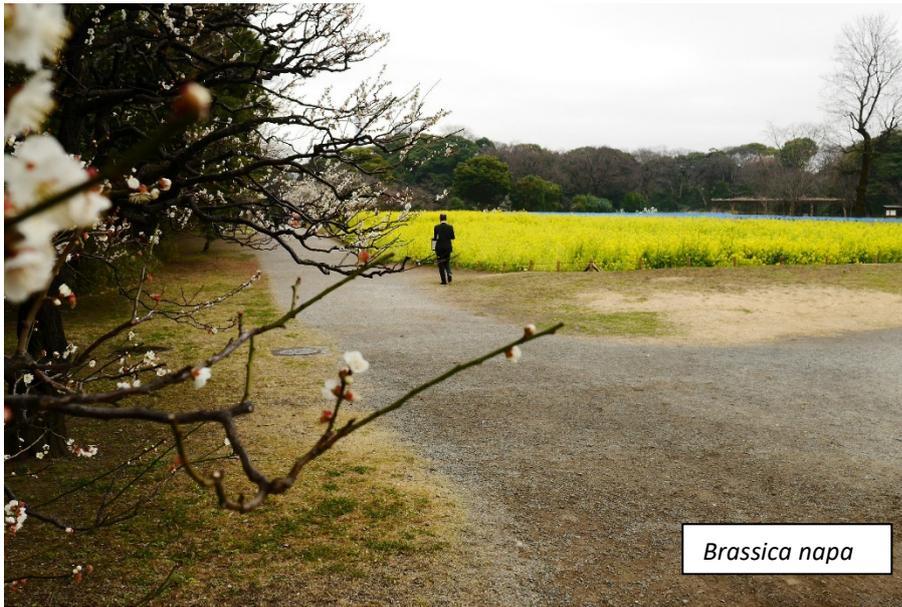
existing habitat gives the garden a greater sense of value and connectivity within the landscape of Japan.

Hama Rikyu itself was designed as a place for the lords to entertain guests with charming landscape walks, immersive tea house views, Hanami viewing and duck/ahiru hunting.

The *Prunus mume* blossoms are still in flower and bringing visitor's attention to the gradual arrival of Spring/ Haru. It is great to experience people coming together to appreciate seasonal transition with the Plum or Ume festival, before Spring has arrived with the beginning of the *Prunus serrulata/campanulata/yedoensis** – Cherry hanami. Ume is also believed to ward off evil – the Japanese plant the tree to the north east as this is thought to be the direction from where evil arrives. *Prunus mume* are best eaten cooked, pickled, or as a juice or wine and should be ripening in June from green to yellow in skin colour. The Ume trees have been cultivated to perform two different key functions: to act as an ornamental flower tree in parks, and to form a sweeter fruit.



The flower garden is hosting a vast expanse of *Brassica napa* which is gleaming yellow even on such a cloudy day.



Brassica napa

Pinus mugo bend and meet each other scattered across the plains adding to the sense of grandeur throughout. One *Pinus* is even 100 year old.

The duck hides were not anything that I had seen before and so it was interesting to see how the *Phragmites* and *Phyllostachys* had been planted around the small islands in the ponds to provide habitats/ positions for ducks to feed within

easy sight of the hunters. There were small hides close to these as well as channels dug lower and coming off from the ponds to one side – banked by wooden panels. It was here that the hunters hoped to tempt the birds with food and clattering noises on wood to mimic the language of the ducks. They did this from within the larger mounded structures which had a slit for spying on the fowl. The actual capturing hunters would then emerge from the nearby hedge planting with very large nets.

Mounds allow the visitor the opportunity to really appreciate these views that enable you to imagine being in a wider, truer landscape.

The ponds are reflective of both the trees and the surrounding skyscraper offices, offering a further, heightened perspective. There are several cedar wood bridges leading across the ponds – forming platforms for seeing the reflections of the garden from another angle – enhanced by the light levels and positioning of trees and plants.

I especially enjoyed this garden landscape as it really felt as if you had solace to think and relax. It was expansive, but quite touching in its obvious personality due to being able to hark back to its original functions.

Day 4 (Finance)

Pasmo 2000 yen

Rice cake 80 yen

Rice ball and tea 170 yen

Cake 370 yen

Entrance to garden 300 yen

Ramen 1000 yen

Water and crackers 250 yen

Green tea gifts and sweets for home 4000 yen

24/02/2017 Kyoto weekend

Kiyomizu doru

A Buddhist temple and shrine – A National Treasure and key tourist attraction. This is as it is a large demonstration of a traditional set of tapered, thatched temple buildings. It was constructed by balancing wooden pillars as part of a staged theatre area from the early, Japanese historical period of Nara.

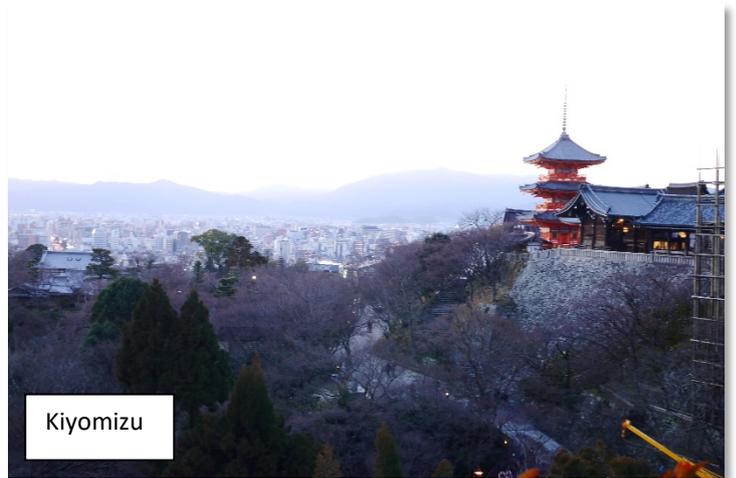
Kyoto as a city is much older than Tokyo; and more traditional in terms of showing earlier styles of Japanese architecture. The older, residential buildings are lower to the ground and made of darker, *Pinus* wood with tapered, roof corners.

Kyoto is also a different landscape – it is described as a basin which alters the microclimate, creating cold, snowy winters and hot, humid summers. In this basin, the gradient changes are much more noticeable with rice (*Oryza sativa*) fields leading to snowcapped mountains. The mountain (yama) region, Arashiyama, can be seen from Kiyomizu.

Even the food of Kyoto is different – much lighter in taste and more concerned with sharing lots of small dishes. There are less stocks made of the richer, sweeter soy with soba, udon, ramen or soup. The vegetables used are also fresher in taste, including *Bambusa vulgaris*, *Phyllostachys edulis* and *Nelumbo nucifera* (also the Buddhist Lotus symbol) and wildflowers such as *Equisetum telmateia*.

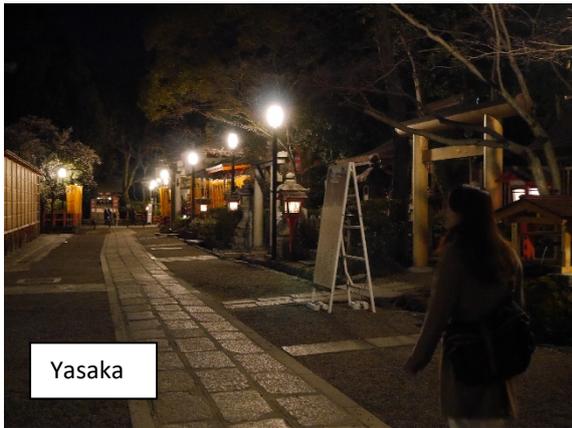
The landscapes and views surrounding the temple are significant due to their height which allows for a vast panoramic perspective over Kyoto to the mountainous, temple and shrine region of the Fushimi Inari area.

The pagoda temples are situated in the hillside – set on pathways that run through a forested banking *Pinus thunbergiana* (*Japanese Black Pine*), with great swathes of *Prunus serrulata* (*Sakura*). The park pathways and refectory pools are highlighted at night with spot lights, especially during Hanami. *Acer japonica* trees also look wonderful on mass here during the Autumn, with an intense red dominating the hillside – the star shaped leaves (*momiji*) are well regarded amongst the Japanese.



Yasaka shrine

A Shinto worship area of numerous spiritual gateways in the center of the geisha Gion district in Kyoto. It is surprising how you can enter the shrine area and the noise levels completely drop. This is partly due to the presence of trees which are so important to Japanese people living in cities and lacking that essential connection with nature. In this area, there were major gates and lanterns to thank the sponsors of the worship site. The smaller shrines tend to represent the worship of nature and local place spirits. These are set along stone pathways, between rock features. It is advised to enter these gates at the edges as they are mostly a portal for spirits and ancestors to pass through. These Shinto shrines are also planted with *Prunus* trees nearby and offer a green oasis and a place of thoughtful meditation and consideration amongst the busy cities. They were originally designed to connect the local community to their sense of place. This then evolved into providing pilgrim sites for people living outside of the city.



Day 5 (Finance)

Pasmo 1000 yen

Bento box and water 1000 yen

Bus to temple 500 yen

Entrance fee 500 yen

Cooked plum festival present 750 yen

Soba soup, sesame tofu and tea 1000 yen

25/02/2017 Daishin-in community Zen garden

A peaceful example of a Zen temple garden from the fourteenth century in Japan. Here, we found large, wooden temples and living quarters with walkway platforms and a stage platform for sitting and contemplating the fresh, green, brown and grey circular shapes within the garden. This temple is a Buddhist monk's family residence. Relatives may well live here to tend to the temples – it certainly has a strong sense of community within. There are shrines set out for local ancestors within the alcoves of traditional wooden temples with bamboo mat flooring. The shuttered doors lead out onto the stage before the garden. At the time a Buddhist monk ritual could be heard due to a low, steady, natural sounding drum beat.



The garden could be viewed from different perspectives and angles, due to the continuous layout of connecting wooden bridges and walkways. It looks different from these different standing or sitting positions and altered further with the changing sunlight and cloud. This really persuaded you to stop for a while and contemplate the garden. I think that this effect was partly the purpose of the Zen style which seems abstract and simple in its limited colour scheme and plant palette, but highlights the sense of nature, weather, spirits and ancestors guarding the temple.

The garden consisted of *Acer japonica* trees, bare but for young, red apical branch growth and new buds. There were also carefully positioned, small *Pinus* trees, *Bryophyta* yet to be a mesmerizing, bright green, paving, large rocks and a



white-grey gravel raked in indented lines, following the lines of the paving and structural outline.

The garden encourages you to pause and sense the messages evoked by the straight lines, rippled lines, shapes and block segments. The garden itself acts as another room to the temple, and so it feels more like an inner space than the streets and trees on the outside of the spirit gate.

We also had a brief walk through the various temple gardens at Ryogen- in which are laid out in a similar community focused grid system, between stone and gravel pathways and *Pinus thunbergiana* trees.



Ryoanji

It was important that I visited this garden as it was mentioned in a lecture by Dan Pearson at a conference in Greece to describe some of his experiences working in Japan. The film of this lecture was very kindly forwarded to me from Huw Morgan of the design studio.

Ryoanji is another National Treasure and mostly because of its representation of Zen theology. The simplistic rock and gravel garden holds a strong, peace message to recognize the important things in life, to be able to slow your thinking in order to find a greater awareness of the moment, to be able to reconnect with nature and remember our kindness. To recollect our sense of meaning without just a desire for material gain and fast achievement.

There are fifteen different rocks laid out poignantly to capture the eye from different angles from the viewing platform. The

rippling, raked gravel acts to highlight this, as does the red, stone wall towards the back which glows in the sunlight.

In Spring, the moss growing in circular forms around the rocks will gleam green and the *Prunus serrulata* blossom will bloom as a layer on top of the stone wall.

In all seasons, it holds a striking, abstract quality – softened by the simplicity of the plants and weather forms surrounding the garden. It is interesting to travel here during a time of seasonal transition: we are experiencing what the Japanese call Sankanshion – meaning a pattern of three days of cold, four of warm until Spring/ Haru arrives.

We also took the time in this garden to experience the viewing of a moss and water garden from a tea house, with viewing floor level windows. This was immersive and a giddily tranquil situation to be in with the repeated knocking sound of the bamboo instrument in the stream tipping water from one small gully to the next.



Kyoto Gyoen – Imperial Palace Park

This park was vast, a public real surrounding the old, Imperial buildings. A thoroughfare for runners, sportspeople and locals commuting through a wide, tree passage in the middle of the city from East gate to West gate, or North gate to South gate.

It was interesting to walk through the gravel of such a public thoroughfare and yet be surrounded by a woodland of *Pinus thunbergiana* intermingled with *Acer japonica* trees and some strikingly old *Pinus* supported by stilts, or impressively large *Prunus serrulata*.



Pinus thunbergiana



Acer japonica



Pinus thunbergiana

Day 6 (Finance)

Coffee and pastry 500 yen

Lunch 1500 yen

Dinner 1500 yen

Drink and snack 500 yen

Entrance to Ryoanji 500 yen

Shiatsu 3000 yen

26/ 02/ 2017 Konchi-in area - five tier pagoda temple

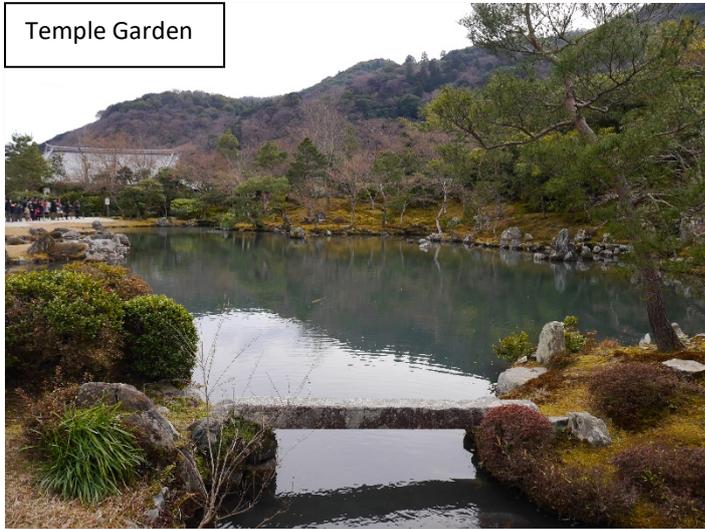
This location holds several Buddhist, wooden temples from the twelfth century with large sculptures of the various forms of Buddha, and old wooden wall paintings.

The surrounding gardens hold a two-looped pond surrounded by different *Prunus mume* and *Prunus serrulata* trees, as well as *Pinus mugo* and *Myrtus luma*. We were even able to see some early Sakura just in blossom which everyone was amazed at and trying to photograph.



Prunus serrulata

Arashiyama temple garden and *Phyllostachys bambusoides* grove



Temple Garden

The garden was found through a temple gate at the end of a long dragon spine paved pathway, with shrine gates going off to either side ranked by small trees of white *Prunus mume*. Through these smaller gates lay prayer shrines in a quieter space to the side, and miniature green, moss gardens with small *Pinus mugo* and *Cryptomeria japonica* – some in a bonsai form.

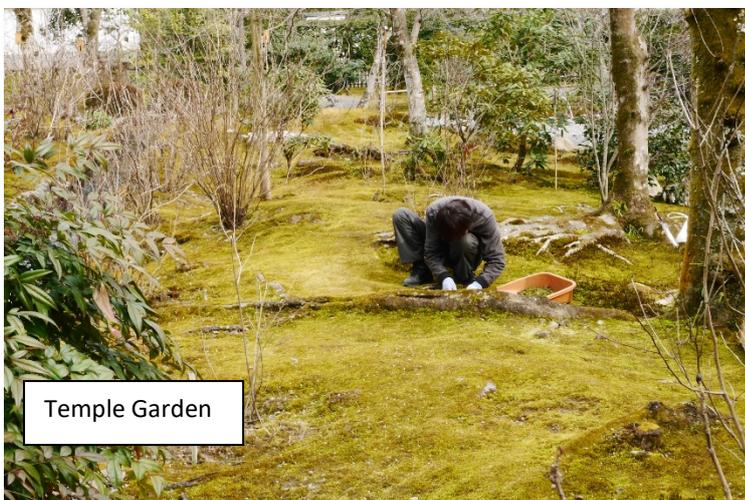
The garden itself around the temple was stunning due to its position with the high mountains behind it – allowing for the Japanese garden design technique of ‘borrowed scenery’ to be used to great effect with a tricking stream running down

a slope from quite a height to feed a large and tranquil pond. This pond had very clear water, reflecting the shrubs planted behind and to the side of it with the mountains in the background – forming a painted image on the surface. The hillside of this borrowed scenery landscape was planted with a collection of different Japanese and some more international species of shrubs, such as: *Pieris japonica*, *Ryukyu Azalea*, *Camellia japonica*, *Camellia ‘Tenrinzigakko’*, *Aucuba japonica ‘Stardust’*, *Raphiolepis umbellata*, *Paeonia*, *Chaenomeles japonica*, *Edgeworthia tomentosa*.



Edgeworthia tomentosa

It was also fascinating to see some of the gardeners on the hillside carefully tending to the moss by wedging it and collecting the dead material and plant debris in large dustpans.



Temple Garden



Pieris japonica

The tunnels of tree bamboo forest are a very spiritual place despite the amount of attraction they bring to the area with tourists taking kimono walks through the green chambers. It was sensory to listen to the bamboo talk in the breeze, knocking against one another and whispering in the leaves. It seemed like a lot of the forest was still fairly young as not yet very hollow inside the trunk. They seem to grow incredibly fast here, perhaps more sandy soil. Also, I imagine they continue to glow more green as the season heads into Spring and Summer, whereas for now they were a calm, subtle shade of green.



Day 7 (Finance)

Coffee and pastry 500 yen

Ice cream 50 yen

Entrance fee to temple 500 yen

Train to and from Arashiyama district 480

Entrance fee to Bamboo Temple 800 yen

Kyoto gifts for family, work and Japanese family 7000 yen

Japanese buffet 3000 yen

Tea 100 yen

-Week 24

27/02/2017 A day to write up the Kyoto findings and to pack and prepare for the train rides to Manami's family home and nursery in Chigasaki.

Day 8 (Finance)

Lunch and food for Manami and Megumi's apartment 1800 yen

28/02/2017 Chigasaki – a city connected to the urban sprawl of Tokyo, although about an hour away. We arrived here from Yokohama train station, which is two tube trains from Kita yamahata – the closest metro station to Manami’s apartment. Lots of people still tend to commute for work from Chigasaki, it is a very packed train with only a few seats to the sides. The Pasmo metro card works on all the trains and tubes. There was very little nature on the ride out, no fields between cities. Chigasaki starts to have more *Pinus* and *Cryptomeria* trees scattered between the buildings though. The whole city is built in a square and grid formation.

Staying at Manami Okutsu's family home which is very kind of them, especially as they have just moved back into it after having it updated, made bigger and with technological aid involved. Manami’s mother and father live here, as well as her oldest sister – Nozomi, with her husband and two young children – Maki and Yuma. The house therefore has several large rooms now, with shutters and sliding doors made of wood. There are also small shrines for the grandparents, the house and to the elemental spirits helping them.



Okutsu plant nursery



Okutsu plant nursery

The father works so hard at the plant nursery, and will not take help from another employee or student

or volunteer, apart from the family. It is a family business and that is important to how they feel about their work.



Okutsu plant nursery



The nursery consists largely of glasshouses for growing on popular plants, such as *Lavandula* and *Cyclamen*. These are usually then taken to be set up as a stall at the market, either in the morning after taking the children to nursery school, or for longer on a Saturday market. It tends to be Nozomi who sets up the stall, whilst the mother tends to the plants with the father, and returns to the house to make meals.

I was introduced to the nursery by Manami's mother in the morning, there seemed to be two long glasshouses in this area, and another one elsewhere. There is a range of plant stock, including *Heuchera*, *Pelargonium*, *Sedum*, *Euphorbia*, *Lavandula*, *Salvia*, *Rosmarinus*, *Viola*, *Cyclamen*. It is quite warm inside, but we opened the roof windows and the doors to let some breeze in. We watered the glasshouses with hose pipes and watering cans as the soil around the plants was already quite dry.



Then, I did a tray and a half of cuttings for them, from some 9cm pot, red *Salvia greggii x lemmonii* 'Raspberry Royale' plants with a lovely scent. I only pruned - with small secateurs - the tall, strong shoots and removed the apical growth and any excessive leaf growth



plus leaf growth from the base. I just put one pair of leaves and a cut shoot of around 5cm - 8cm in a cell tray. Three cuttings in each cell. We then watered these in well.

The cell tray itself was filled with a pre-mixed compost. A sort of dry loam with grit. They were filled in this compost area and then levelled off by scraping and shaking in readiness for planting the cuttings.

Day 9 (Finance)

01/03/2017 Up early to go with Nozomi, after she has taken the children to kindergarten, to the local market in Samakawa with some of the potted plants from the family plant nursery, including the succulents (also some in small pots to go inside the farm shop for sale – put together by Manami), *Helleborus niger*, *Viola*, *Heuchera villosa* 'Purple Palace' and *Hedera helix* 'Variegata'



After lunch, I was tending to the succulents, more regularly grown on in different, unique colours by Manami. The colours can range from shades of grey to shades of purple or pink on a wide spectrum. These are fairly easy to propagate, in a similar way to *Aeonium arboreum* if a new piece of growth is snapped off and placed in soil with perhaps a little bit of water it should develop roots. The leaves will also root fairly easily.

I planted these small pieces of succulents, such as *Graptopetalum* and *Echeveria elegans*, with roots in thin, sack like pots of around 7cm placed in trays that were then positioned on benches further down and watered.

succulents



succulents



succulents



succulents

Day 10 (Finance)

02/03/2017 Today, I was able to pot up several more trays of succulent plants of all different sizes which was lovely as I had more of a chance to see how they develop as they get bigger growing in the glasshouses.

I was also able to take cuttings of spider plants/*Chlorophytum comosum* and the Miyozoki's draping, coral, necklace plant/*Rhipsalis cereuscula* which was interesting and something that I have not tried before. It seems as though they grow much more readily in this soil and climate.

You propagate the cuttings by using small secateurs to cut off the small plantlets that develop on some of the stolon growth, and then by pointing the cut end of the branch into the



one third filled 9cm flexible pot, before topping the pot up with some soil to hold the plant in place.

We planted four of the *Rhipsalis cereuscula* cuttings in one point, by placing the cut end of the shoots into a little soil at the base of a pot, before holding them in place by filling the rest of the pot with compost.

We then watered all the new trays, waiting until the watering can nozzle was pouring lightly before holding it over the cuttings. It was also important to try to water them with an even spread of water, so best to keep the watering can moving up and down the lines of pots.

Day 11 (Finance)

03/03/2017 Nozomi and I took the plants from the nursery to the farm shop market again this morning, as the others had already been sold. We took some *Salvia* in flower this time as well, and more succulents to display.



We then met Manami's auntie at the nursery and she helped us to finish off the cuttings of the draping, coral plant – *Rhipsalis*.

After lunch, I went with Nozomi and Okasa to view some of the early Zen Buddhist Temples in the district of Kamakura. These temples and shrines tend to date back to the eleventh century, and they are based upon the original Kyoto design. The district attracts lots of tourists for this reason, although it is more like a countryside town in essence – it takes around 40 minutes by train from Chigasaki during the busy commuting hours.

Engaku-ji was founded by a well-known soldier in the Mongolian wars, hoping to become a patron to Buddhism - the large, wooden temples are flanked by *Sequoia* and *Chimananthus* so there is a lovely, calming sent as you walk through the gates.



Meigetsu-in was my favourite temple garden as it held a beautiful, circular viewing window to see the garden beyond from a tea house building. It framed an Ume tree wonderfully. And is a gesture to the bright moon. There was also a string example of a rock and gravel garden to pause and reflect in front of. This garden also shows trails of *Hydrangea*, and is pleased to highlight the key seasonal flowers such as *Helleborus niger* and *Cornus mas*. It was also fascinating, due to the very old representation of Buddhist burial graves for the patron's soldier friends and family.



Meigetsu-in



Meigetsu-in

Kencho-ji was impressive due to its vastness as an active, Buddhist Zen meditation and ceremonial center – entirely made of stacked wood, with a platform for walking around the building to view the reflective ponds that glow a soft green due to the surrounding foliage. In the sunlight, the slow rippling effect also shows as shadow rippling on the tree trunks.



Finally, **Jomyo -ji**, which is a little further out on a bus ride, reveals a hill top graveyard and temple site, alongside a traditional moss garden set in front of an old tea house design.

There were also plenty of *Cryptomeria japonica* shielding this moss garden from being too open as a setting, and along the pathway there were beds of tree *Paeonia*.



After dinner, back at the family home in Chigasaki, Manami met me after work and we made our way on the train and metro back to her apartment in Yokohama via Kita yamata station.

Day 12 (Finance)

Presents from Kamakura 1300 yen

Lemon tea 130 yen

04/03/2017 Packing and resting before the flight

Day 13 (Finance)

05/03/2017 Flight from Haneda airport at 09:45

Day 14 (Finance)

5000 yen drinks and snacks for flight, gifts and thermal jumper

Overview | Although this experience went by rapidly, it has provided me with an amazing insight into some of the initial, baseline methods used by the Japanese people for creating soothing and sustaining green spaces and gardens within their cities by forming 'borrowed scenery'.

I have learnt that the majority of temple Zen garden designs are based upon the core of traditional Buddhist or Shinto theories which respect the provision of space – and the peace and focus of thought that this restores to souls who have become overwhelmed by the need for rapid action and gain in modern society.

I have found that, just as I read up on the natural theory of inherent landscape design for my Landscape Architecture degree, here too the gardens are enhanced by the landscapes that they are either inspired from or sitting on – climate, gradient, riverways and woodland play a very strong role in the symbolism of Japanese gardens.

I feel that in a similar way to other island countries, Japan is utterly connected to its weather cycles and seasons – and so in this way the people take pride and enjoyment from the blossoms that are their central harbingers of Spring - it was an honor to be there when this transition was just starting to take place with the Ume festival.

I was astounded by the politeness of the people I met, and by the graciousness of the Okutsu family who let me live among their lives for a week. Whilst, I helped to propagate seasonal herbs, such as *Salvia greggii* and local market favourites, such as succulents like *Echeveria elegans* and displayed them to be sold within what seems to be a fairly well respected (although not as honored as it once was) and advantageous agricultural scheme, that sets aside spaces at local markets and town squares for each of the surrounding farming families.

This visit had greatly inspired me as I return more immersed in the Zen garden design style than I even expected. I am eager to explore more of the innovations that have taken place at The Forest Garden in Hokkaido. I also hope to bring what I have learnt into the project that I am working on at the moment as part of my traineeship at Trentham Gardens, and to take this on further as I continue to develop my own horticultural voice.

Bibliography | '*Zen Gardens – Kyoto's Nature Enclosed*', Tom Wright, Mizuno Katsuhiko, (2008), 14th printed edition, Suiko Books, Kyoto.