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Japanese Zen Gardens

Yoko Kawaguchi

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The austere, enigmatic rock gardens of Kyoto, Japan's ancient capital, have never ceased to fascinate garden lovers. Weather-beaten rocks set in an expanse of white sand raked into geometric patterns challenge the idea of a garden as a space chiefly dedicated to the cultivation and appreciation of plants. How did the taste for this kind of garden arise? What do the stones represent? Why aren't there more flowers? *Japanese Zen Gardens* sets out to answer questions such as these. This book explores the Zen characteristics of these gardens, and discusses the impact Zen Buddhism has had on the Japanese way of looking at the natural world. This book considers how these gardens can be seen as artistic representations of Zen consciousness, reflecting the longing for religious enlightenment. This book also shows how key traditional concepts, such as that of using the confined space of a garden to create a landscape in miniature, were reinterpreted in Zen temple gardens. It explores how to make use of traditional imagery, such as those of mountain and sea, and how they reflect that acute sensitivity to the passage of time and the changing of the seasons which characterizes so many other Japanese garden styles. Richly illustrated with newly commissioned photography by **Alex Ramsay**, this book covers important examples of Japanese Zen temple gardens from the fourteenth century through to the twentieth century. It appeals to readers who are interested in gardens, garden design and garden history, as well as in Zen Buddhism and Zen aesthetics. It also serves as a useful reference book for travellers planning a trip to Japan to visit the country's temples.

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