

PORTLAND CLASSICAL CHINESE GARDEN  
*organizational profile*





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## Introduction



Welcome to *Lan Su Yuan*. *Lan Su Yuan* is the Garden's Chinese name. This name is translated as the Garden of the Awakening Orchid. The orchid is a symbol for the family who would have built and lived in this Garden. Their awakening took the form of aspiring and persevering towards becoming upright Confucians in their public life and wise Taoists or Buddhists in their private life. Today, all of us who enjoy this Garden stand in the place of that family and our journey is also an awakening process, towards understanding and appreciation of China's rich history.

*"We enter the entire culture of China through the moon gate of the garden. In that privileged spot all the elements of Chinese culture meet."* Edwin T. Morris, *The Gardens of China*. Above our Garden's moon gate, these words are inscribed, *"Enter the wonderland."* We invite you to join us in the journey into the endless delights of this wonderland.

Cynthia Johnson Haruyama  
Executive Director  
April 2009





## Mission

The mission of the Portland Classical Chinese Garden is to cultivate an oasis of tranquil beauty and harmony and to inspire, engage, and educate our global community in an appreciation of a richly authentic Chinese culture.



## Introduction to Classical Chinese gardens

A garden built for pleasure is a universal art form found throughout cultures and throughout history. Yet each culture produces a different form of pleasure garden reflecting its worldview and values. As one of the world's richest and longest continuous cultures, it is not surprising that China has produced a unique aesthetic for its pleasure gardens. This aesthetic has roots over 2,500 years old and is largely China-centric with little influence from outside cultures. Within Chinese culture, the pleasure garden tradition for private family compounds of the city of Suzhou during the Ming and Qing dynasties (1364 – 1912) is viewed as a high moment for this art form. Today, the city of Suzhou has about sixty of these gardens remaining and eight of them are designated as UNESCO world heritage sites. After the many upheavals of the 20th century, many of these gardens are in less than ideal condition. Yet the traditions that created and sustained these gardens through centuries



of political, social and economic turmoil have survived. These gardens are being restored and have opened to the Chinese public and tourists.

These gardens were “discovered” by the West primarily during the nineteenth and early 20th centuries, just as the political and economic health of the Qing dynasty began to decay. Unlike the “discovery” of Japanese gardens, Chinese gardens did not immediately inspire a rush to imitate and incorporate into western gardens. While Chinese plant species have become the staples of most western gardens, the worldview and values behind the Chinese garden art form remains mysterious and unapproachable to many Westerners.

People in the western world tend to associate the word “garden” with a plot of land adjacent to a house used for plants only. To Westerners, a garden is defined by plants in arranged in an

aesthetically pleasing way. We tend to look for and evaluate by aesthetic design of the whole and rarity and beauty of the individual plants. Although gardens in American and Europe are often part of estates, the architecture is viewed as a separate art from the garden itself.

Chinese gardens are quite different altogether. Chinese gardens were more properly the true home of the wealthy, educated classes. Not surprisingly, the garden then is where all the classical Chinese art forms are found: architecture, painting, music, calligraphy, poetry, furniture,



ceramics, carvings, penjing, and horticulture for aesthetic rather than commercial or productive purposes.

While the Chinese called such spaces “gardens,” it might be more accurate for us to call a classical Chinese garden the combined living room/family room/office/garden of a wealthy urban-dwelling family’s home. Other than sleeping and cooking spaces, the “garden” was where the fam-

ily spent the majority of their time. In keeping with this tradition, Portland’s Chinese Garden is both an indoor space represented by the four buildings and a series of outdoor spaces connected by covered walkways which the family would have used as hallways to move between the various spaces within their indoor/outdoor home.

In addition to being a literal living space for a family (usually an extended family covering several generations and siblings and their grown families), a classical Chinese garden was also in-



tended as metaphor and symbol on many levels. In American culture, we tend to view metaphors and symbols as intellectual abstract concepts removed from our actual lives. To wealthy Chinese families living in Suzhou during the Ming Dynasty, men, women and children were steeped (or aspired to be so) in over a thousand years of continuous tradition in painting, poetry, literature, music, philosophy, political science and religion. The themes and symbols from these were

as close to them as literal reality. For example, the trio of pine, bamboo and plum in the Garden's courtyard are symbols of moral resilience and perseverance which were the most aspired-to qualities for the good man. No educated Chinese during Ming times would register those three as merely attractive plants. They would also have been "reading" the landscape as they viewed them, and would have been just as alive to the metaphorical meaning of the trio.

It may be helpful to think of a classical Chinese garden as containing five major elements, all of which are equally important:

1. Architecture
2. Plants
3. Stone
4. Water
5. Art & Literature

In addition, inside the buildings would have been collections of furniture, paintings, porcelain, books, carved jade, lacquer ware, lanterns, scrolls, musical instruments and more calligraphy. Some of these would have been on display. Many of the most precious objets d'art might have been wrapped in silk and carefully stored away, brought out reverently for special occasions.

None of these elements were intended to be experienced as separate types of things. Instead the design is based upon the Chinese dualistic concept of the universe as consisting of yin and yang, the opposites which together always form a whole – dark & light, stone & water, hard & soft, male and female. And the whole is in-

tended to be viewed one frame at a time as if it were a Chinese scroll painting being unrolled. Within each frame is a complete picture of yin and yang composed of some or all of the Garden's elements.

Another important concept influencing the Garden's design is geomancy (also known as *fengshui*)--a belief that an essential spirit (qi) flows through all objects and space. In the Chinese worldview, qi must be correctly acknowledged through careful spatial arrangements in order to create auspicious conditions. These are just some of the kinds of different beliefs that influenced the worldview that lies behind each Chinese garden. As you can see, the western concept of "garden" which is primarily about plants can be a barrier to our ability to see and appreciate a classical Chinese garden

Another point to bear in mind is that classical Chinese gardens are intended to provide a multi-sensory experience. The calming tranquility and beauty is more than just visual. There are fragrances (plants chosen especially for scent throughout different seasons), sounds (the water dripping from the tiles), and tactile feelings (the different rockwork of the pathways under your feet).

We should also remember that these gardens were lively places where friends were entertained, children played, and servants hurried to and fro. The most quintessential activity in such gardens has been immortalized in Chinese paintings for centuries: on-the-spot poetry composing contests among friends, lubricated by co-

pious amounts of wine. As the effects of wine took hold, the verses would veer from erudite references to past master poets to bawdy puns. At other times, the Garden would be used for playing music or painting in one of the pavilions with friends, or earnest discussions of Confucian texts or Taoist philosophy. Performances by hired professionals were also common: theater, dance, opera, puppet shows, and music.

## Portland's Garden — *Lan Su Yuan*

Portland's garden is one of the very few gardens built in the Suzhou-Ming Dynasty style that have been built outside of China. Garden designers and artisans from Suzhou designed and built this Garden. It is arguably the most authentic representation of this art form outside of China. Compared to the surviving gardens within Suzhou, it is in much better condition and therefore closer to what such a garden would have looked like in its heyday. Like the original gardens of Suzhou, this Garden is unique masterpiece of this traditional art form. And also like the original gardens, this Garden

The enclosed garden was intended as a representation in miniature of the beauty of the wild natural landscape, evoking images of mountains, forests, streams and lakes and conveying as much sense of unlimited space as possible within the midst of a densely populated urban metropolis. Straight lines and symmetry are avoided since they evoke the manmade rather than nature. Small hidden recesses open up into unanticipated viewpoints to accentuate the garden's expansiveness within its limited space. Under the prevailing Confucian moral

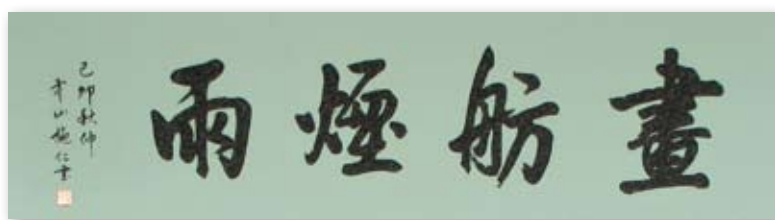


is intended as a refuge from urban life – a place for reflection, contemplation and connection to nature.

code, all pure hearts aspired to the simple life as a gentleman farmer surrounded by nature. However, as in much of history in other parts

of the world, wealthy families preferred to congregate in cities where life offered more opportunity for social gatherings, entertainment and consumer luxuries. These gardens allowed them to live (or pretend to live) the simple rural life in the midst of one of the largest and most

prosperity and refinement, so that in fact both visitors and the public were allowed access to much of these gardens at various times. Portland's garden has the Hall of Brocade Clouds nearest the entrance and looking out on to the lake as its reception hall.



sophisticated urban centers of the world during the 15th through 19th centuries.

## Architecture

Architecture in a Chinese garden is more than just decorative outbuildings such as we see in the “follies” sometimes placed in western gardens. Instead, in a Chinese garden, buildings are some of the most heavily-used rooms in the entire home. There is traditionally a reception hall for anyone coming to visit. Technically, these public spaces were intended as the only public space in the garden while the rest was private space for the family. However, in practice, gardens were built as much to be enjoyed as to display one's

Other buildings usually include a lounge house which we might today describe as the family room. It is the room in which children often played and Chinese fathers might spend time with their children. Portland's garden has the Xuan building in the southeast corner which represents this function. In a more secluded place in the garden, one would find the scholars hall which in today's parlance we would call “Dad's office.” Here the male members of the family, especially the patriarch (father, grandfather or uncle), might practice traditional gentlemanly arts such as painting, music, calligraphy and poetry. Here also they would study for the government civil service examinations which were the gentlemen's

highest attainment in the Confucian tradition. By and large, all Chinese were Confucians in their public lives. Confucianism was a moral philosophy emphasizing righteous roles and duties towards family, society and most importantly, government. In their private lives, many Chinese were also Taoists or Buddhists, focused on awakening and developing their inner spiritual and moral qualities by withdrawal from the secular world yet which paradoxically was intended to prepare them to be even better Confucian moral actors in society.

Two final buildings were the two-story building which the Portland Garden uses as a public Teahouse and the smaller semi-enclosed building on the lake. The second floor of the Tea House would have been women's space where wives, concubines, daughters and unmarried women of the family congregated daily to practice their traditional arts of embroidery and dowry preparation and probably some of the same

examinations (which took years to prepare for and pass) and if they were fortunate, the highly-coveted government jobs. Women from wealthy families seldom went out in public so the 2nd story vantage point was their window into the world as it looked out over the enclosing walls of the garden and into the teeming streets beyond. The small building on the lake was a symbolic representation of a boat and was a venue for small gatherings to enjoy the scenery and the lake.

## Plants

China has been referred to as the “mother of gardens.” Over one-eighth of the world's plant species are native to China. Many of the plants we know and love in the West such as flowering peach, camellia, magnolia and peonies originated in China. The Garden contains over 400 tree and plant species typical to a classical Chinese garden. Many of these species are rarely



arts and studies as the men in the scholar's hall. Children would have spent time up here as well. Often the women of the household managed the family's estates and finances while the men dedicated themselves to the civil service

seen in cultivation outside of China.

During the course of 2,500 years of gardening tradition, the Chinese came to cultivate specific plants that were treasured for both their symbolic

meanings and beauty. For example, one of the most admired plants is the tree peony. Beginning during the Tang Dynasty (618 – 906 A.D.), gardeners began to selectively breed to develop



large, brilliantly covered blooms. These plants became coveted treasures so that over centuries of cultivation, peonies came to symbolize honor, wealth and aristocracy.

Just as Chinese plants became standard in western gardens over the centuries, some western plants also were incorporated into traditional Chinese gardens such as the Southern Magnolia. Today in our garden, 90% of the plants are native to China while the other 10% have been “adopted” by Chinese horticulture over time.

Another part of the Garden’s plant collections are the miniature landscapes known as penjing. Everyone knows about Bonsai, those tiny clipped trees in pots associated with Japan. However, Bonsai is a derivative of the Chinese “Pensai” meaning potted tree landscape. The Chinese were translating large landscape into miniature pots for centuries before the Japanese ever picked up their pruning clippers!

Mark Vossbrink, penjing expert and volunteer

curator of the Portland Classical Chinese Garden’s collection, explains; “Penjing is an ancient Chinese art of translating the world landscape into the miniscule and has been traced

back to 221 BCE. Typically there are two types; Landscape penjing made up of rocks, moss, plants and sometimes small figurines, boats and structures and Pensai penjing which feature trees”. The Garden’s penjing are on long-term loan from Mr. Vossbrink’s private collection.

### **Stone**

As in the West, Chinese culture has a reverence for mountains. The use of rock in a Chinese garden symbolically represents the presence of mountains. As the Ming dynasty poet/painter/garden designer Wen Zhengming said, “Truly in the midst of a city there can be mountain and forest.” Stand-alone rocks in a Chinese garden are often called “peaks” or “roots of clouds” and piled up rockeries (as above the waterfall in our Garden) are known as “artificial mountains.” In addition, the Chinese have an aesthetic appreciation of individual rocks, especially those with odd, irregular shapes. The most treasured rocks in Chinese culture are water-worn limestone from Lake Tai near Suzhou.

## **Water**

Water is viewed as stone's opposite – soft and nurturing. Abundant water is symbolic of nature's abundance and of the two essential products that created wealth for Suzhou, fish and rice. In a classical garden, water was used to simulate the natural landscape by channeling it into miniaturized lakes, waterfalls and streams. The use of the word "lake" for what is really a pond in the middle of Portland's garden is an example of the illusion of greater space and wild nature. A manmade pond with goldfish ringed by exotic exquisitely tended trees and plants becomes a lake. An artificial waterfall and pile of rocks becomes a mountain with a cascading natural stream.

## **Art & Literature**

On top of this artificial pastoral landscape, the Chinese also added layers of meaning and beauty through art. Poetry and calligraphy adorns the buildings and rocks. The poetry and calligraphy throughout the garden is difficult for a westerner to appreciate. We cannot read the language and even when it is translated, it often is only a fragment or reference to a poem or saying which the highly educated Confucian family would have recognized and understood. It is said that few westerners appreciate the beauty of great calligraphy such as that produced by venerable masters for Portland's garden so we can only take it on faith that these inscriptions have an innate grandeur.

The Garden also has a collection of replicas of Ming and Qing dynasty furniture in the buildings.

The Cultural Advisory Committee is seeking to collect appropriate cultural artifacts to be displayed in the Scholar's Hall. This Committee is comprised of volunteers and the Garden's Volunteer Coordinator serves as a liaison.



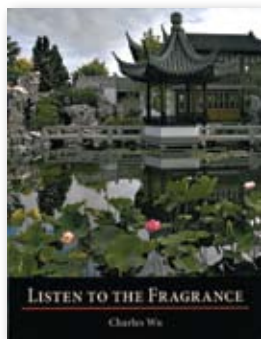
## Garden as Museum

The Garden is not merely a replica of a classical Chinese garden, it is a living masterpiece of art in its own right. In Chinese art forms, the blending of past masterpieces is not viewed as copying but rather the ideal way to create new art. The Garden represents this tradition. It intentionally incorporates elements from what are considered as the four best surviving classical gardens in China but is still a unique landscape and viewed as a separate masterpiece created by Chinese designers and artisans.

As a masterpiece, the Garden is a living museum of collections of plants, architecture, art, stone,

document the collections so that both visitors and scholars can know what it has and to care for and preserve its collections (in the case of plants, to grow and replace over time).

Documenting the collections is one of the first steps in curation. The Garden's inscription collection (the calligraphy on rocks, buildings and gateways) has been documented in a published book which is available in the gift store. The plant collection is being documented in a plant database that will serve both as a management tool and information resource. The plant database is accessible via the Garden's



calligraphy and garden design, furniture, penjing (the miniaturization of landscape originated in China and is known as bonsai to most westerners) and other artifacts. Just as art museums protect and curate their collections, the Garden's obligation as a living museum is to

website. Artifacts are being gathered together to eventually be used in some way in the Scholar's Hall. Curation of the other collections ought to occur eventually but there are no current plans to do so.



# Learning in the Garden

## A Comprehensive Visitor Experience

A classical Chinese garden represents a millennium of continuous history of the world's most populous and, for much of the time wealthiest and most technologically advanced country relating to almost every aspect of traditional Chinese culture:

- Religion and philosophy
- Art, music, architecture
- Horticulture and agriculture
- Politics and government
- Social and economic history
- Regionalism and ethnic/cultural distinctions within China

involvement and local leadership that created the Garden, and the long history of cultural influence between China and the West.

Yet these topics, like the Garden itself, are quite foreign to most of our visitors. The Garden's mission to engage, educate and inspire cannot be fulfilled merely by providing access to the Garden via admission. Without conceptual frameworks to understand the Garden, many visitors literally cannot see it. By bringing their western concept of garden to the experience, they are looking only for plants and cannot "see"



In addition, Portland's Garden serves as a portal to local issues such as historic Chinatown, the Chinese-American community, Suzhou-Portland sister city relationship, community

the rest of the Garden. For example, they can see the buildings but they wonder why they're there taking up so much space and leaving so little space for the plants.

In order to fulfill its mission, the Garden must actively seek to engage visitors. This can only be done by starting from the visitors' worldview and expanding outwards from there. This means the Garden must begin where the visitor begins – with western experiences of garden, family, metaphor – and use language and concepts that will help them both connect to their current worldview and reveal what heretofore most of them hadn't known even existed – an exotic world 500 years ago of great wealth and sophistication with both universal and distinct ways of relating to the natural world through a garden.

The Garden is in the middle of a comprehensive Visitor Experience planning process to:

- ensure an enjoyable experience that will create desire to return and tell others of the experience
- plan and promote high-quality educational information and experiences
- eliminate obstacles to learning

This planning process seeks to understand what will motivate visitors to come, what “promises” will help visitors form expectations for the experience that the Garden can reasonably fulfill, and what will motivate visitors to return and spontaneously spread the word to other people that they also should come for the experience. We will be aligning this planning process together with the branding program to ensure that we are creating the correct “promise.”

This project is being paid out of the East Meets West grant funds designated for developing visitor materials and programming.

## Cultural activities in the Garden

Half of the Garden's mission is to engage, inspire and educate. Programs and events are a way to invite visitors into a more immersive experience that transforms them from mere observers into participants. Participation is known to provide more compelling, memorable experience while facilitating deeper and longer-lasting learning.

of the Garden's programs is to provide low-cost introductory programming to the majority of the 120,000 visitors and 4,000 members who are unfamiliar with Chinese gardens, history and culture and not particularly knowledgeable about horticulture. Prior programming was pitched towards visitors and members who were



In addition, cultural activities help to remind visitors of an important element of this kind of garden – people worked, lived, played and entertained in such spaces. Variety and quantity of programs and events also helps drive admissions and retail by creating awareness that the Garden is a compelling place to visit again and again.

The Garden hosts a variety of programs for visitors, members, donors and new audiences throughout the year. Starting in 2008, the focus

already deeply interested/knowledgeable about China or horticulture. This kind of programming served only a small number of the total visitors and members and had a per capita cost that would have made it prohibitive to provide to a majority of visitors and members. Programming aims to provide a window or entryway for visitors into Chinese cultural traditions. This can take the form of demonstrations that visitors can join in such as Tai Chi, mahjong, Qi Gong and calligraphy. In other cases, there are lectures on such topics as feng shui or acupuncture. Other

activities are story-telling or art activities making simplified versions of traditional art forms. Still other activities encourage visitors to use the Garden as their personal retreat from urban life such as Western forms of sketching or painting.

Programming in the next few years will follow the recommendations and priorities set out in a comprehensive Visitor Experience Plan. The planning process is underway with a completed plan and initial implementation underway by the end of 2009. It is likely that programming will primarily consist of introductory materials such as the website, an introductory video presentation, a new audio tour, and a variety of brochures. The planning process and initial implementation is being funded by the East Meets West grant. Further funding will be needed and it is anticipated that the Plan will identify other grant-fundable opportunities to be pursued. In future years, as the majority audience of visitors and members becomes more educated and interested in the Garden and Chinese culture and history that programming will also grow to include classes and programs for more knowledgeable audiences.

Beginning in 2009, each program has specific objectives and a budget:

- a) educate and inspire – Chinese New Year, school tours and outreach, educational programs for visitors in Garden, music & poetry in Teahouse, docent-led tours
- b) generate revenue – Tuesdays by Twilight summer concert series, Chinese New Year, school tours, group tours

c) bring new audiences to the Garden – Chinese New Year, Tuesdays by Twilight summer concert series

The Garden seeks sponsorship to underwrite most of these programs. In the past, sponsorship solicitation has been relatively late and one event at a time. In 2009, sponsorship solicitation will begin before the beginning of the calendar year and offer a full year of sponsorship choices and opportunities. Many programs and events are also the result of partnerships with other organizations that provide expertise and their own enthusiastic volunteers. This allows us to provide quality programming at little to no cost.

Programs and events are created and staffed by the Event & Program department, headed by Event Manager, Gary Wilson and Event Assistant, Michele Starry with much help from volunteers.

## Facilities

As the majority of the Garden consists of built structures exposed to the elements and heavily used by 120,000 visitors per year, facility maintenance is a key operational function. Facility maintenance runs the gamut from ensuring fish and plant-safe water conditions in the pond to constant dusting, oiling and repainting of the extensive woodwork, to

lanterns or other exhibits, putting up tents, rigging lighting and audio/visual equipment.

The Teahouse is owned by the Garden but rented to The Tao of Tea as a concession. Major maintenance and repairs to the Teahouse fall to the Garden. In addition, the Garden rents roughly finished space at the corner of NW 3rd & Davis



repairing the hand-laid stone mosaic pathways, to hiring and supervising contractors to repair electrical, water, sewer and many other issues. Behind the scenes are things such as the electric room, the underground vault which houses the pumps for the waterfall and pond, water connections, air compressors for heating in the Teahouse and the list goes on. Facilities staff also cares for the interior of the office space, are first responders to after-hours security alarms, and prepare the Garden for major events by hanging

for its administrative offices. All employees have their offices here and a conference room is used for Board meetings, volunteer meetings, staging area for performers at Garden events, and for event preparations. The lease is a year-to-year lease and the landlord has plans to redevelop the property once he can obtain permits and financing. The Garden subleases a portion of the space to NW China Council on a year-to-year lease, earning some revenue. Eventually, the Garden will need to find permanent office space.

The Garden also leases a windowless storage space immediately across the street from the gift store for inventory and maintenance equipment storage. Large architectural replacement parts are housed at an outdoor storage area under the Steel Bridge.

Current Facilities staff consists of a Facilities Manager (Sam Dresselhaus) and a seasonal assistant for 4-5 months in the dryer summer months when much of the painting and repair work needs to be undertaken. There is always considerably more work to be done than can be handled by this amount of staffing. A long term goal of the Garden must be to increase the Facilities maintenance budget either to hire additional staff or allow for more contract services.

A Facilities Committee consisting of several staff members and Board members and the Executive Director has been recently formed to:

- Identify priority capital projects to enhance visitor experience, revenue-generating rental capacity or infrastructure needed for more effective, efficient operations. Includes cost estimates, sequencing and prioritization.
- Determine desired maintenance levels for Garden and cost estimates.
- Prioritize maintenance tasks within current budget constraints

In addition, after a life-threatening workplace injury to the Facilities Manager in 2008, a Safety Committee was formed. The Safety Committee

includes a Board member, several members of the operations staff, and a representative from the Teahouse. This Committee has already brought many safety innovations to the Garden and continues to prioritize and oversee implementation of further improvements. This Committee is comprised of Garden staff members, a representative from the Teahouse, and a Board member.

#### Renovations & improvements to facilities

In 2007, the City of Portland allocated \$100,000 to the Chinese Garden from the System Development Charges (SDC) allocated to Portland Parks. These funds were designated for capital projects that improved carrying capacity to serve the public.

The Garden is currently compiling project budgets for the highest capital priorities that fall within this price range:

- Heating and air-conditioning improvements for Teahouse
- Replace back-up waterfall pump
- Upgrade electrical grid for entire Garden
- Electric carpet for one of Garden buildings (an experiment to find a less costly solution than installing radiant heating under the current floors)
- Design and implement first phases of outdoor lighting improvements

In the spring of 2009, the Garden will be submitting a grant proposal for these projects in order to qualify for the SDC funds. Construction

on these projects should be finished by end of 2009.

Back-end technology to support visitor services and administrative functions are needed. Highest on the list are new point-of-sale and phone systems. The Garden is considering applying for some technology grants during 2009 to try to fund these needs. Website features and upgrades such as on-line ticketing and membership are being added in 2009.

Further capital improvements await development of other fundraising/capital campaign plans.



## Funding

Most non-profits struggle to achieve and sustain adequate funding for their programs and assets. Without adequate funding, a non-profit cannot fulfill its mission. So non-profits are paradoxically not in the business of making money but must still pay a great deal of attention to money in order to provide the services for which they are intended. The Garden is still in the process of trying to achieve appropriate funding levels for both annual operating costs and long-term capital needs. The Garden began its life in 2000 with construction debt and without any operating reserves or endowment. Construction debt was in the form of low-interest loans from the Portland Development Commission. In business terms, this meant that it was highly undercapitalized.

High visitation in the first two years which is the norm for brand-new institutions brought in adequate revenue to support operations at first. However, there was not enough revenue to make payments on the construction debt or build up any kind of operating or capital reserves. As visitation leveled off at lower levels by the third year, the Garden sought to diversify and strengthen its other revenue sources – rentals, retail, membership, contributions, sponsorship and endowment. In addition the

2004 settlement over the pond leak added to the reserves. And in 2005, the Garden obtained a loan write-off from the Portland Development Commission, thereby erasing all construction debt. These steps combined to begin to provide sufficient funding for the Garden but as is quite common with non-profits, it was still not quite enough.

Beginning in 2003, the Garden conducted a successful capital campaign (the Lotus Campaign) that generated some cash reserves, as well as funding for some specific projects such as three years of school outreach, development of K-12 curriculum materials, and new plants. Since 2003, the Garden has dipped into those reserves every year (except for 2007) to cover operating costs. When the new Executive Director began in mid-2008, this practice of continuing deficits was brought to the Board's attention and a commitment was made to bring the operating budget into the black by 2010. As a result of focus on increasing revenues and strategically controlling costs, the anticipated deficit for 2008 was cut in half. In response to the economic crisis, additional cost reductions including some personnel lay-offs were made in early 2009 to bring the budget into balance in 2009. Considerable efforts will need to

continue to increase revenues and control costs in order to achieve balanced budgets in the next few years. In addition, the organization is committed to raising additional funds for capital improvements.

### **Unrestricted vs. restricted income**

Unlike the for-profit sector, non-profits often have sources of income that can only be used to pay for specific kinds of expenses. These funds are called “restricted.” Examples are grants for specific projects. Such funds cannot be used for any purpose other than that which was promised to the donor. The majority of a non-profit’s expenses, however, are operating costs which cannot be paid for out of restricted funds. Therefore, a non-profit must always ensure that it generates enough unrestricted (or operating) revenue to cover its operating costs such as personnel, utilities and rent. A successful non-profit has a mix of both unrestricted and restricted income to fund operations and projects. A third category of funding is an endowment which is called “permanently restricted.” Endowment principal cannot be touched but the interest earned becomes unrestricted income.

### **Earned Income - Retail & admissions (unrestricted)**

Admissions provide almost half of the Garden’s income and retail another 15%. After the initial high visitation during the Garden’s first two years, visitation has hovered at the 120,000/year range for the past five years. 64% of visitors

come from outside the Portland metropolitan area from all over the country and world. The primary motivation for visiting the Garden is word-of-mouth recommendations from friends and family. Out-of-town visitors also provide most of the Garden’s store spending, in even greater proportion than their share of the admissions.

Visitor surveying began in 2008 and we have preliminary data about the aspects of the Garden visitors most enjoy (the view of the Lake), their domicile and reasons for coming. We have a clear understanding that currently many visitors do not truly connect with the Garden unless they have some prior knowledge about China or take a docent-led tour. The Visitor Experience Plan will address this issue.

The Garden’s goal is to increase admissions to 150,000 by 2011. To this end, the Garden’s advertising for non-Metro area audiences will continue, with an emphasis on free advertising opportunities and group tours. Also, the Garden will promote local visitation at community events and in local media, again searching for free or low-cost opportunities. However, much of the focus will also be on making the in-Garden experience more compelling through the Visitor Experience Plan so that the most powerful engine of advertising, word-of-mouth recommendations, will increase. We know that 150,000 is a reasonable goal in that in 2006, Portland’s Japanese Garden had had admissions of 120,000 for many years and then with new marketing to out of town visitors and members

and more events and programming in the Garden, their attendance exceeded 200,000 in 2008.

Simultaneously, the Garden is working on increasing retail sales. The volume of retail sales is clearly linked to admissions so as admissions increase, so do sales. Research shows that the better the experience is at the site, visitors will then spend higher amounts in a gift store. However, the dollar value of sales is also affected by the quality and variety of merchandise in the store. Since August of 2008, the Garden store has been refurbished with new lighting and display shelves and the merchandise increased and upgraded. The store's inventory is now of sufficient quality to be advertised to members and others as a destination store for Chinese-related merchandise.

Admissions and retail are supervised by the Operations Director (Jane DeMarco). Retail is managed by the Gift Store Manager (Becky Dresselhaus) and staffed by the Manager and Visitor Services staff (Andrea Bottger, Harris Goodman and a seasonal employee).

### **Earned Income – Rentals (unrestricted)**

To generate revenue, the Garden rents out the entire Garden, a building or specific site within the Garden, or the Teahouse after regular business hours. The Garden maintains a list of approved caterers that renters may use, covering a range of price points and types of food. The exclusive catering list is necessitated by the

unique challenges the Garden poses to caterers (lack of kitchen, little staging space, no water or power sources in key areas) so prior experience in the Garden is necessary. In exchange for the exclusive rights to cater in the Garden, each caterer on the list is required to donate food or service to at least one of the Garden's own events. Rentals are handled by the Event Director and Event Assistant (Gary Wilson and Michele Starry). Photo shoots using the Garden are also handled by the Rental Department.

Beginning in the fall of 2008, rental opportunities have been more actively promoted and advertised, especially to the wedding market.

### **Earned/Contributed Income – Membership (unrestricted)**

Membership provides 15% of the Garden's income. Membership at an admission-based institution is a financial transaction for most members whereby they calculate how many times they will want to visit the Garden and members' only benefits vs. the annual cost of membership or the cost of per visit admission. The value of membership to an institution is to provide a stable revenue source and cashflow and to identify potential donors. Donors are people who make a financial contribution to the institution that is more than they receive in actual benefits. Members above the \$100 level are considered to be donors. The majority of members live within the Portland/Vancouver metropolitan area.

Currently, the Garden has just over 4,000 members. There are membership levels for individuals, students and families. Membership entitles them to free admission during regular hours, 10% discount at the Garden store, early purchase on the summer concert series, a newsletter, and a series of members' only evening hours in the summer. Whenever possible, the Garden arranges for other benefits such as reciprocal admission at the Japanese Garden one month of the year and discounts at other China-related cultural events in the Portland area.

Membership is best promoted to visitors from the Metro area on their first or second visit to encourage them to think about returning again and becoming users of the Garden rather than just visitors. Beginning in 2008, membership is being much more actively promoted during ticketing and Garden store transactions. To support membership promotion, starting in 2009 advertising for the Metro area will promote the Garden as a place for repeat use rather than just a place for a single visit in a lifetime.

Membership is staffed by the Membership Manager, Van Machado, and is part of the Development department.

### **Contributed income – Development (unrestricted & restricted)**

The goal of development is to create, nurture and sustain relationships with individuals, businesses and foundations which will collectively and continuously provide the philanthropic resources

(money, leadership, volunteers, skills, advice, advocacy, connections) the Garden needs in order to fulfill its mission. The primary focus of development is on individuals as they give 84% of the \$260 billion that is donated in the U.S. each year. Foundations comprise another 11% and corporations only 5%. Successful development requires the entire organization to focus on recruiting and thanking donors and to view all visitors as potential donors.

There is a 2008-09 Development Plan that explains basic facts about fundraising and outlines the 2008-09 activities and appeals the Garden will conduct in order to recruit and connect with donors and to raise money. Prior to August 2008, there had been no sustained development efforts for several years and earlier development efforts had been the single responsibility of a single employee rather than an organization-wide imperative. As a result, donor relationships are troubled and need to be mended prior to attempting to raise money. Much of the 2008 and 2009 donor communications and events are aimed at repairing these troubled relationships. In the development field, nurtured relationships begin to yield financial results above and beyond the investment after 2-3 years so we expect fundraising results to remain relatively low until 2010-11. We will be measuring success in the quality and quantity of re-engaged relationships and many of the initial results may come in the form of non-financial contributions.

The Development department is headed by the Development Director (Wendy Mitchell). The

Board Development Committee works with the Development Director to plan and implement relationship-building and fundraising efforts. This Committee is chaired by Mia Nicholson.

### **Contributed income – Grants (restricted)**

Grants are a form of funding for specific time-limited projects. Generally, foundations do not make grants to cover operating costs except for the start-up costs of new programs. Obtaining grants requires identifying funders likely to fund the desired projects, developing relationships with the funder, preparing full project budgets and plans, and writing grant applications. Grant-writing tends to generate low returns unless a relationship is first developed with the funder and the funder has indicated interest in the project.

Current grants:

#### *East Meets West*

- 3-year school outreach program (completed)
- Visitor programming & materials (see Learning in the Garden)

#### *Living Collections*

- Documentation of plant collections (partially completed)
- Horticulture related classes & events (completed)
- Visitor materials (see Learning in the Garden)

Other grant opportunities are being considered for high-priority needs.

### **Endowment (permanently restricted)**

The Garden's endowment fund is approximately \$125,000. Earned interest becomes unrestricted revenue while the principal is never touched. Currently, the Garden holds its endowment in a interest-bearing Money Market Account. Over the next year, the Garden should look into long-term investment and management of these funds. Current best practices on endowment management includes retaining some earned interest to grow the principal to match inflation while paying out the rest as unrestricted income.

### **Financial Management**

Day to day finances are handled by the Business Manager (Dianne Sherwood) with oversight by the Executive Director. Monthly financial statements are reviewed by the Treasurer and distributed to the entire Board. An annual review is conducted by a CPA. Tax returns are prepared by the CPA.



## History

The Garden began as a dream in the early 1980's. It became a reality in 2000 through the vision, perseverance and generosity of elected officials, community leaders and many, many citizens.

Chinatown neighborhood was selected and the non-profit Classical Chinese Garden Society was founded. Four years later, Mayor Vera Katz pledged to civic leader Bill Naito to spearhead an effort to obtain a site for the Garden. Through



In 1985, City Commissioner Mike Lindberg and Congressman David Wu travelled to China to explore a sister city relationship. They visited one of China's most fabled historic cities, Suzhou (in the Yangzi delta, inland from Shanghai) and were enthralled with the beautiful gardens there. Commissioner Lindberg resolved to have a garden built in Portland as the centerpiece of a sister city relationship with Suzhou.

It took until 1988 for a sister city relationship to be formally established. A year later, Lindberg created a task force to investigate the feasibility of constructing a garden. The Old Town

her efforts, the board of Northwest Natural Gas donated a 99-year \$1 lease on a site at the corner of Northwest Third Avenue and Everett Street for a Suzhou-style Chinese garden.

Portland then signed a partnership resolution with Suzhou's Mayor for design and construction. Drawings and a model were developed by the Suzhou Garden Board and the Suzhou Classical Garden Architectural Company. In 1997, a separate non-profit, the Classical Chinese Garden Trust, was formed to raise funds to build the Garden and fundraising is pursued under Mayor Katz' leadership for the next two

years. Many foundations and individuals pledge their support along with a major loan from the Portland Development Commission.

Ground-breaking occurred in June of 1999. U.S. companies performed the site and foundation work while Chinese artisans worked in Suzhou on the wooden parts of the building and decorative windows. Every piece is then shipped to the U.S., including five hundred tons of rock. Over seventy Chinese workmen arrive in the fall to actually construct the garden's buildings and pathways. Through a cooperative effort of landscape designers, generous local and out-of-state nurseries, volunteer horticultural experts, other volunteers and the Portland Parks bureau, the plant collection is amassed and planted. A third non-profit, the Portland Classical Chinese Garden, is formed to operate the Garden once it is finished.

September 14, 2000, the Garden officially opens. Over 400,000 people visit the Garden during its first two years. The Garden's first Executive Director, Gloria Lee, is hired. After the first two years, annual Garden visitation levels off at about 120,000.

In 2002, furniture collections are added to the Garden's buildings in honor of volunteer Marcia Weinstein. A pond leak discovered in the early years requires extensive negotiations with the architects and contractors to reach a financial settlement. By 2004, extensive repairs are undertaken to fix a leak in the pond liner and the Garden is closed for a few weeks. In 2003-

2004, the Garden launches and successfully completes a fundraising campaign (the Lotus Campaign) to improve horticulture collections, develop K-12 curriculum materials and a school outreach program, and build up operating reserves.

In 2008, Gloria Lee announces her pending retirement. Cynthia Haruyama is hired in the spring of 2009 as the Garden's second Executive Director.

## Horticulture

As classical Chinese gardens originated in a warmer summer-rain climate, it requires great skill to grow authentic plants in Portland's climate. The Horticulture department is responsible for all plants within and around the perimeter of the Garden as well as the water plants. The

aesthetics of each plant, grows replacement plants in the off-site greenhouse, moves and removes the aquatic plants seasonally, and replaces and adds new plants as needed. Since a garden is always a work-in-progress as plants are living, changing entities, the horticultural department



Horticulture department works from the original planting plans and according to a yearly work plan developed in conjunction with the original garden designer, Ms. He of the Suzhou Garden Bureau. Ms. He's focus is on the major plantings – placement and pruning of trees, shrubs and vines - and the sightlines within the Garden. The Horticulture department is also concerned with the authenticity, health and viability of all of the plantings plus the smaller understory plantings that add horticultural interest to the Garden. The horticultural staff maintains the health and

is constantly anticipating and responding to change.

They also are responsible for a greenhouse (rented from Portland Public Schools) where they grow replacements for the unusual plants, winter over the water lotus plants which might freeze in our climate if left in the pond, and propagate plants for the semi-annual plant sales. They lead horticulturally themed tours on a regular basis. As the most visible staff members to visitors, they must always project a cheerful willingness

to answer questions about the Garden. Behind the scenes, they are also responsible for keeping the plant database up to date.

The horticulture staff consists of one Horticulture Manager (Glin Varco), a horticultural assistant (Lucy Baker), and a seasonal worker (usually 6 months of the year). As with the Facilities staff, there is considerably more work to be done and another goal should be to increase the Horticulture staff by at least one more full-time person.

## Leadership

The Board and Executive Director are jointly responsible for ensuring that the Garden is fulfilling its mission. This translates into determining and monitoring strategic direction, working to create appropriate and adequate resources for the Garden to do its job, and financial oversight. In addition, the Board has the role of monitoring the Executive Director's performance in terms of the goals and objectives set forth in the mission, annual budget and Strategic Plan. An Executive Committee works closely with the Executive Director to more closely monitor operations, strategic plan priorities and prepare information and recommendations for the entire Board to consider.

The Executive Director is responsible for managing the Garden's staff, finances and operations and keeping the Board informed about

all key issues and trends. In partnership with the Board, the Executive Director also works to develop appropriate and adequate resources for the Garden to do its job. The Executive Director must ensure and monitor her own workplan plus those of all staff and departments, the annual budget and goals to match the mission, Strategic Plan and the Garden's resources.

A Board Nominating Committee is responsible for identifying, recruiting and orienting new Board members. The Committee is chaired by Anne Naito-Campbell.

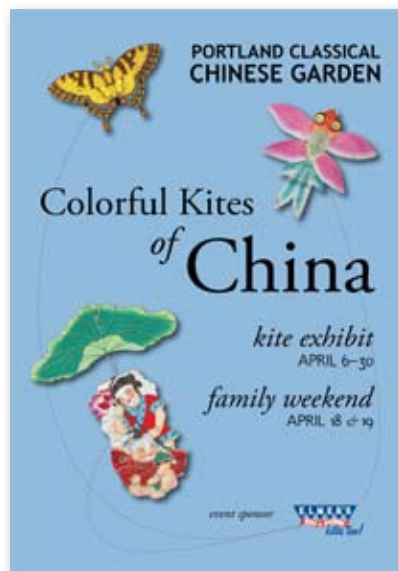


## Marketing & Communications

Communications and marketing supports admissions, retail, rentals, volunteers, events, programs, development and membership by designing and printing advertising copy, signage,

opportunities and managing media relations.

The Communications department consists of the Marketing Manager (part of the responsibilities of Operations Director Jane DeMarco) and Communications Manager (Scott Steele). Eventually, the Garden needs a full-time Marketing Manager.



While the Garden has a logo and tagline, its brand identity needs to be strengthened and standards developed for and implemented in all collateral materials. In addition, the Garden needs to determine the messages that will be most compelling and relevant to the variety of audiences it must engage – visitors, members, donors, volunteers, and public officials.

collateral materials and website postings. Design and printing are outsourced as needed. The Communications department is responsible for the design and content of advertising, the website, collateral materials (Membership brochure, event invitations, etc.) and the newsletter. The Communications department is responsible for developing an annual advertising plan and budget, preparing and sending out press releases, seeking free and in-kind marketing

### **Branding project – refreshing the image**

In the business world, it is felt that identity materials need to be refreshed every five years. The Garden is therefore overdue to re-invigorate its image and message in the community. Parallel to the Visitor Experience planning project, we are working with a creative firm to identify the primary and secondary themes and audiences

for our brand. Once these are agreed to in a Creative Brief, design and messages, the creative firm will develop messages and design. Most of this work is being performed pro bono.

You might expect that after nine years of explaining the Garden, we would know which core messages and experiences resonate with our visitors and members and those which inspire them to return and become supporters. Yet we have neither data nor consensus on this. For most of the Garden's history, we have relied upon the idea that the Garden sells itself – once visitors come, they will “get” it and our job is done. At the same time, we have been telling stories – lots of them – trying to cram in all of the 1,000 years of history and culture and the local issues into each introductory visit. In fact, however, ad hoc visitor debriefs suggest that many visitors find the Garden pleasurable but only after overcoming their initial impressions of it not being a garden, not being a big enough experience to justify the cost of a ticket, and the lack of information to help them understand and appreciate all the non-plant aspects.

While branding cannot address the experience itself, we believe a more communicative brand identity would help visitors correctly anticipate what their experience will be like and therefore actually enjoy the experience more. It should also both guide and relate to the stories we are telling about the Garden so that all of our messaging - branding, marketing, interpretation and education – is creating and fulfilling the same promise to our visitors and members.

The deliverables for this project are:

1. A comprehensive brand identity platform including design guidelines, templates and key messages which effectively communicate our essential identity to visitors, members, donors, readers of advertising, web browsers & volunteers
2. Key messages
3. New logo
4. Style guide which will guide our external & in-house designers
5. Design template for newsletter

These are all the deliverables we can afford at the present time. Using the styleguide, we will continue to create other materials in-house. When budget permits, we will probably outsource some of the materials back to the creative firm to ensure we are maximizing the new brand.

## Neighborhood & Chinese community

The Garden is located in the heart of historic Chinatown/Japantown. This area was vacated by the Japanese when they were moved to internment camps during World War II. Chinese businesses began to move out over the last two decades so that if there is a Chinatown in Portland now, it is out on 82nd Avenue.

The current neighborhood is a mix of social services, some businesses, low-income single occupancy hotels, nightclubs and more recently more restaurants and other non-profits such as the University of Oregon and the soon-to-be new MercyCorps headquarters. For generations, this has been an economically depressed area where the iconic images are of a Skid Row nature.

Public financing assisted the construction of the Garden in the hopes it would provide an

anchor for economic redevelopment in the neighborhood. Experience has shown that the Garden by itself is not enough. However, there have been new restaurants, coffeeshops, retail, and middle-income housing units

added in the past decade.

The Garden engages with and participates in the three neighborhood governing associations.

The Garden wishes to honor the historical connection

between it and the Chinese community that once lived in the neighborhood. This is accomplished through supporting Chinese community major events and associations. The Garden actively seeks to include members of the Chinese community on its Board, among its volunteers, and to hire Chinese-Americans or Chinese speakers for its staff.





## Political advocacy & public funding

The Garden is owned by the City through the bureau of Parks & Recreation. The non-profit organization operates it through a license agreement with the City. The non-profit is obligated to support itself while caring for and operating the Garden for the community's benefit. Major facilities and capital improvements can technically be referred to the City for funding subject to its own budget limitations. Since the City is not overflowing with extra funding, obtaining any City funding is an uphill challenge. Constant monitoring of the city and Parks bureau budget situation is needed, as well as, constant (but friendly) advocacy at all levels (City Council, Parks bureau leadership, Parks bureau line personnel) for compelling funding needs of the Garden. There are also opportunities to obtain in-kind services from Parks' many service

departments such as tree care, pest management and greenhouse. Since no sustained advocacy has been conducted since the Garden opened, there have been little public funding or in-kind services. However, there is now a public funding Task Force consisting of some Board members and the Executive Director and they believe that by applying strategic consistent advocacy over time, some public funding opportunities will arise for the Garden.

Another area of political advocacy by the Garden is on neighborhood development issues. The Garden participates along with the neighborhood associations on many issues such as land use, Portland Development Commission financing and the ratio of social services to other businesses.



## School groups and curriculum

The Garden has conducted a 3-year school outreach program primarily to rural Oregon schools outside of the Metro area from 5/06 – 5/09. This entailed developing K-12 curriculum materials introducing classical Chinese culture and the Garden. Then the Garden's Educational Director (a position funded for only 3 years as part of this project) took the materials on the road. Final tally was over 35,000 students and teachers reached by this program. This project was part of the East Meets West grants. The grant funding for this project comes to an end in May 2009 and cannot be renewed.

However much of the impact of this program will continue as the curriculum materials are now available via the website and CD to teachers throughout Oregon. Also, docent tour guides have been trained specifically for school groups and the program has been advertised to teachers in the Metro area.





## Suzhou and Sister City Relationship

The Garden is a product of the sister city relationship between Portland Suzhou, China. While today cities such as Shanghai and Beijing are best known in the West, from the 14th through 19th century, Suzhou was the most famous city within China. While the imperial court and officials resided in Beijing, the paradise on earth sought by most Chinese was Suzhou, a city on the Yangzi delta, inland from present-day Shanghai.

During those five centuries, Suzhou was the wealthiest, most prosperous and most sophisticated city in China. All the best merchandise and agricultural products came to Suzhou and most of it was manufactured in Suzhou's workshops for silk, cotton, embroidery, furniture, lanterns, silver, paper woodblock printing, etc. The wealthy and powerful sought to live in Suzhou or retire there after their government service in far-flung posts of the empire. Around their homes they spent fortunes building elaborate gardens. Surviving today are sixty

of these original gardens, eight of which are UNESCO world heritage sites.

Due to the sister city relationship, Portland built the most authentic Suzhou-style garden outside of China. As delegations from Suzhou and other parts of China visit Portland, a must-see is Portland's Chinese Garden where they feel they have stepped into the glory days of Suzhou's past.



The Garden works closely with the Portland Suzhou Sister City Association to maintain a vibrant government-to-government and people-to-people link with Suzhou. Today, Suzhou retains its lovely old character in the center of the town with its historic canals, bridges, city gates and gardens. Traditional handicrafts are still practiced by many artisans so that Suzhou is still a center for silk, embroidery, painting

and other arts. Yet Suzhou is also an economic powerhouse in modern China with industrial parks and high-tech manufacturing.



## Volunteers

Volunteers enhance all aspects of the Garden's operations from docent-led tours, gardening and facilities assistance, staffing events and programs, and helping with mailings and other office functions. Volunteers add great vitality to the Garden through their presence within the Garden and the passion and knowledge they bring. Through their interactions with visitors, members and the community, they develop and are knowledgeable about what the Garden needs to do to connect to people. They also serve as a dedicated constituency in the community to spread word-of-mouth recommendations about the Garden.

While volunteers are not free, they are a relatively low-cost way to increase the Garden's functions and services. To keep volunteers happy and engaged requires staff time enthusiastically dedicated to recruiting, training, scheduling and thanking volunteers. The volunteer program is managed by the Volunteer Coordinator, Katie Hill. However, working harmoniously with and acknowledging the contributions of volunteers are a responsibility of all staff.



## 10th Anniversary

Significant anniversaries create the opportunity to re-engage donors, members, volunteers, elected officials and the community. The Garden will be using its 10th anniversary to remind our community of the Garden's presence and value and to encourage them to come for another look. Many in our community have still not visited the Garden. Many came once during the first two years and feel they have "seen that, done that." This is an opportunity to intrigue them to come again and help them realize that the Garden is a place of many layers and infinite experiences, worth visiting and re-visiting all the time.

The anniversary celebrations will kick off on June 7, 2009 with a ceremony honoring Mayor Vera Katz who was so instrumental in moving the Garden from dream to reality. This will mark the tenth anniversary of the groundbreaking for construction in 1999. Over 1,200 of the Garden's founders and early leaders have

been invited. More news and anniversary-related events will follow. The final celebration will be a gala dinner held at the Portland Art Museum ballroom on September 16, 2010 marking the 10th anniversary of the Garden's opening.



The 10th Anniversary Gala Committee is chaired by Gayle Cheldelin and is staffed by the Development Department. Honorary co-chairs are Arlene and Harold Schnitzer.



## Glossary of Terms

### **Confucius**

Confucius, a wise man who lived sometime around 500 B.C., is the founder of an intellectual tradition that seeks to provide wisdom and structure to ensure a just and effective political and social order. At the heart of the Confucian tradition is the belief that all things and people must be in right relationship with each other and from this harmony will flow social and political justice and harmony. Confucians therefore are both focused on internal character in order to understand and live up to every right relationship and on external deeds in that such “right relationship” prepares them to be effective government administrators. The highest idea of every Confucian gentleman is to be of service to his community through government service.

### **Dynasty**

Starting from 220 B.C., Chinese governments and historians have divided time into eras known as “dynasties,” named after the ruling family who founded the primary government. There has been remarkable similarity in style of government over this time, broken only by the rise of a brief republican government and then communist government in the 20th century. An emperor ruled from a capital city,

with governance functions executed by a class of people known as the scholar-officials (see below).

### **Literati**

Another name for scholar-official (see below), this term also suggests the other cultural pursuits of the scholar-official. Beyond mastering the Confucian classics, the literati sought to develop their aesthetic and spiritual sensibilities through practicing the arts of painting, calligraphy, poetry and music and by staying close to the natural environment through such places as a garden. Women of these households also were part of the literati class, becoming well-educated in the same texts as the men and also practicing the same arts.

### **Ming Dynasty**

1368 – 1644

### **Penjing**

Miniaturized rendition of the natural landscape similar to a landscape painting. This tradition started in the 7th century in China. Subsequently Japanese culture adopted this practice and developed the art of bonsai. Though sharing a common origin, bonsai and penjing have

developed distinct differences, most notably in bonsai's adherence to an idealized vision of the tree or plant. Penjing, in contrast, seeks the lively poetry of wind, water, and time in shaping a composition. Penjing often includes figurines and rocks to complete the miniaturized landscape.

## **Qing Dynasty**

1644 - 1912

### **Scholar-official**

Unlike most of the world's history where leadership positions were primarily based upon kinship or fixed classes of nobility, Chinese government officials have always been drawn from a meritocratic process created to discern knowledge and wisdom. Over time, this process became known as the "examination system" which tested scholars' knowledge of the Confucian classics. It took years and sometimes a lifetime to rise up through examination levels so the class of people who pursued this course became known as the "scholars" for the aspiring part of their lives and "officials" for the time when they actually passed a high enough level to be awarded a government post. Any male could aspire to become a scholar-official. Preparation for this life became widespread at all levels of Chinese society during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Although few actually succeeded, the equal opportunity to compete regardless of class or birth, created a social mobility that was at the heart of Ming and Qing dynasty social stability.





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