This year, as part of the 60th anniversary celebration of the Seattle Japanese Garden, a group of Garden volunteers is putting the finishing touches on a collection of articles about the creation of the Garden by two of its designers, Kiyoshi Inoshita and Jūki Iida, garden engineer Nobumasa Kitamura—Iida’s assistant during the construction phase—and others. Most of the articles are from Japanese publications and have been translated into English for the first time for this collection, which also includes archival correspondence, biographical notes, and the original plant list. Entitled “Japanese Writers on the Japanese Garden in Washington Park Arboretum, Seattle, 1959–2009,” the collection was curated by two long-time Unit 86 Garden guides, Shizue Prochaska and Julie Coryell, both of whom also did most of the translation work. Shoko Majima, a friend of Shizue who works in the Tokyo library system, tracked down and sent her copies of most of the featured articles.

The impetus for the collection came a decade ago, when Shizue and Julie helped create video presentations for the Japanese Garden’s 50th anniversary. “We discussed the need for an archive group,” says Shizue, “that would study the history of the Garden for the sake of future generations. A key step to knowing the past was to translate all the records written by the
Japanese builders of the Garden.” As Shizue and Julie say in their introduction, the article collection enriches our understanding of the builders’ vision, talent and care in the Garden’s creation and continuation.

Asked what they learned from their work on the project, Julie says “Our translations reveal the courage and stature of the people engaged in the gift of the Garden—from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Metropolitan Tokyo Green Spaces Division. They drew from the best historic garden designs in Kyoto and Tokyo, and embraced the adventure of making a beautiful, spirit-infused garden in a different country.” Says Shizue, “I also learned the particulars of Japanese garden building. Nothing is left to chance. Rocks, trees, shrubs, ground covers... they are all carefully selected.”

Julie and Shizue hope to publish the collection soon in print and/or digital form. Keep an eye out for updates on the Seattle Japanese Garden blog.

Following are excerpts from three of the articles, one each from Inoshita, Iida and Kitamura.

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**Outline of Scenic Beauty**

The south end of the garden site is connected to the hill, so make this area like a mountainous region where conifers grow thick as in the deep forest. From within the forest, an existing stream and prospective short stream flow out. Where the two streams meet, the tea house stands. Make this scenic spot a place of *yusui kanga*, tranquil beauty.

Near the tea house, the forest becomes a plateau. The stream flows over the bank, coursing into the *mizu’umi*, lake. Here and there the lake edge is vertical, and changes to a cape, cobble beach or sandy beach. The north shore features implied houses. [To the west] behind a *tsukimidai*, moon viewing platform, a cultivated area becomes an orchard with plum and cherry.
trees, and the like. To the north side of the lake, rocks emerge and become islands. Using the central big island, build a bridge to connect the opposite shores.

From the opposite shore, the lake turns into a plain or flat land. The lake shore is low, with a sandy beach and inlet where reeds and Japanese bush clovers grow. The north end of the lake faces an implied village with harbor (and the future clubhouse site). Opposite the harbor is a wisteria arbor for the villagers’ recreation. The lower stream of the lake on the east shore passes a rocky area, where it becomes a small river and flows into the ocean (outside the garden.)

As described, water flows out of the mountain and creates the lake. Make the water scene the center of the garden and build a path around it. While strolling the path, different sceneries can be enjoyed along the way.

—From “An explanation of the design of the Japanese Garden in the University of Washington Arboretum,” by Kiyoshi Inoshita

Pamphlet in Collected Papers (1959)

Shizue Prochaska and Julie E. Coryell, translators

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Teiseki to Jyumoku, Stones and Plants

...William [Yorozu] took me around hunting for rocks but we could not find what I was looking for. On the evening of the third day as we were returning home along the Snoqualmie River, I heard the sound of dynamite. I asked, “What’s that?” Told they were making gravel, I climbed a mountain to see. It was a wonderful granite mountain. The granite resembled the [prized] patterned rocks of Kami Ōshima, on Mount Tsukuba and looked well suited for a large garden. Located about 50 miles from Seattle, named Bandera and privately owned, the mountain had never been quarried for garden rocks. So, it was simple to purchase 800 tons.

The next item of business was trees and shrubs for the garden. I had expected some difficulties but after we surveyed local nurseries we found there were plenty of evergreen conifers and deciduous trees such as maples. But the specific Japanese varieties of broadleaf evergreens such as mochi no ki, holly, Ilex integra; shii, tanbark
oak, *Pasania* or *Lithocarpus edulis*; and *mokkoku*, *Ternstroemia gymnanthera* were scarce and where I did find them they were not thriving. Assuming there was a lack of soil compatibility, I decided not to use them. As the rhododendron is the Washington State flower, and there are many varieties, I thought that they were very useful as long as I avoided gaudy ones.

The nurseries stocked only small plants under seven inches, which made planting them harmoniously with the large-scale rocks difficult. Most of the trees were upright, requiring deep consideration in how to plant them appropriately. There were abundant choices for ground covers.

... *Shoku Sai*, Planting

As I mentioned before, all the plants were the size of starts and difficult to harmonize with the rocks. Sometimes we deliberately slanted the young straight trees. We pruned most of the lower branches of some trees located in the path of view lines. Of course, I had to admit that our work looked pretty strange, however, it was done with the future in mind.

Fortunately, we obtained spruce and yew trees seven-to-eight-feet high so we could plant them from the base of the waterfall up the hill around the *jūsansō-tō* thirteen-story pagoda…. We planted the shorter four-to-five-foot tall, red, black, shore, and white pines around the shoreline and on the middle island. I reminded people they would reach the desired height and shape in about ten years.

—From “About the Japanese Garden at the University of Washington,” by Jūki Iida


Shizue Prochaska and Julie E. Coryell, translators

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**Seko, The Construction**

(People and Machines)

...Skilled drivers of tractor or bulldozer were readily available. Although Mr. Iida’s charismatic personality and his flexible management skills obviously contributed to the rapid completion of this construction project, the efficiency of the machines was a major factor as well. Of course, the work done tended to be rough without remedy. We used on our site trucks, tractors, dump trucks, bulldozers, cranes, tampers, etc. Among these, trucks, dump trucks and bulldozers were useful as we all know. We used handheld tampers for packing small stones and sand into the backside of stonewalls and for pounding cement.

I was curious how they would handle a huge garden rock. For the largest, the *kagami ishi* (mirror rock) [with a smooth, reflecting surface] for the waterfall, weighing about seven-tons, they rented a huge 35-ton crane with a 60-foot reach and with no trouble installed the rock. It was indeed possible to place stones up the hillside, even from a considerable distance. The rental of this machine cost $200 a day including two operators. This might sound expensive, but the work was done quickly, so it was economical after all. Working together skillfully, the two operators responded well to our detailed requests. Since the crane lifted rocks with chains wrapped directly around them, the moss could drop off and the surface scratched. One needs to be very careful when wrapping rocks with chains.

—From “The Japanese Garden in Seattle,” by Nobumasa Kitamura

“Toshi Koen”, No. 26, November 1960, pp. 6–16.

Translated by Keiko Minami Page (2009); edited by Prochaska and Coryell

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