



News Release

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For Immediate Release

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GARDEN PHOTOS: Available upon request

Seattle Japanese Garden Celebrates 60 Years

Commemorative Event Series Marking This Special “Kanreki” Milestone Will be Mix of Virtual and On-Site Programs and Activities

Seattle, WA—June 5, 2020 marks the 60th anniversary of the opening of the Seattle Japanese Garden. Managed in partnership by Seattle Parks and Recreation and the Arboretum Foundation, the 3.5-acre public garden at the Washington Park Arboretum is one of the most celebrated Japanese gardens outside of Japan and a cultural treasure for our region.

In Japan, the 60th year of life is called “kanreki” and is celebrated as a rebirth or re-entry into childhood. This auspicious anniversary seems especially fitting for our garden, which is constantly renewing.

“It is an honor to be stewarding such a beautiful work of natural art and living history within Seattle’s park system. I share nothing but gratitude for the many people who have invested time, passion, expertise, and unwavering support for Seattle’s Japanese Garden over the past 60 years,” said Jesús Aguirre, Seattle Parks and Recreation Superintendent.

“Celebratory events will kick off,” said Jane Stonecipher, Executive Director of the Arboretum Foundation “with the creation of a montage of favorite Garden memories and wishes for its future, submitted by community leaders and friends of this beloved public space.” These kanreki messages will initially appear on the Garden’s website (www.seattlejapanesegarden.org) starting June 5 and later in a physical display near the Garden’s Tateuchi Community Room.

A season of special programming is set to follow. While the Garden is closed to the public, some programs, such as Michelle Kumata's "Northwest Nikkei" art installation, will be reimaged in digital format. Other events, including an October 6 celebration of the 1960 Imperial visit to the Garden, are currently still on the schedule and will be evaluated as the season progresses.

A particularly meaningful part of the kanreki season is the launch of a special partnership with the Green Legacy Hiroshima (GLH) Initiative (<http://glh.unitar.org/>). The GLH is a non-profit organization from Hiroshima, Japan that propagates seeds from trees that survived the atomic bombing. In January of this year, the Seattle Japanese Garden became the first partner in the Pacific Northwest to receive GLH seeds. The partnership furthers the long and meaningful relationship between Seattle and Japan, acknowledging the past while shaping a greener and more beautiful future.

Seattle-based Consul General of Japan Yoichiro Yamada observed, "We are living in unprecedented adversity right now. It is inspiring to think about the resilience of the trees and the new life these seeds will bring."

Seeds from five different plant species propagated by the GLH were received from Hiroshima this past winter and are being cared for by UW Botanic Gardens staff until they are ready to be planted in the Seattle Japanese Garden. A ceremony to acknowledge the reception of the seeds will be held as soon as is reasonable.

Keep an eye on the Seattle Japanese Garden website (www.seattlejapanesegarden.org) for details about the 60th anniversary event series. The Arboretum Foundation and Seattle Parks and Recreation are preparing for multiple scenarios as we celebrate this special kanreki anniversary. Sign up for eNews (via the Garden's website) to get latest updates. Enjoy our daily social media updates and other virtual content while the Garden is currently closed.

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## Garden History & Milestones

- *Design and construction (1958–60)*

In 1958, Arboretum Foundation representatives met with the head of Tokyo Metropolitan Parks Division, Mr. T. Moriwaki, who inspected the proposed garden site and generously offered to provide the landscape plans and a teahouse. A team of eminent Japanese landscape architects worked on the design, including **Juki Iida**, who came to Seattle in 1959 to supervise the construction. Iida hired local Japanese-American gardeners and artisans to shape the landscape, install the plants and dramatic rockwork, and build the wooden structures.

The design was inspired by the "**stroll gardens**" of early 17th-century Japan, which invite visitors to journey along a winding path through the varied landscapes of Japan—mountains, forests, waterfalls, rivers, lakes, islands, and the sea. About 800 tons of local Bandera Mountain

granite boulders were used to create the Garden’s dramatic waterfall and other landscape features. The Garden was dedicated and opened to the public on June 5, 1960.

- *Teahouse history and ceremonies (1959–Present)*

The original teahouse, donated to Seattle by the people of Tokyo, was destroyed by fire in 1973. The current teahouse, an identical reconstruction, reopened in 1981 and was named “Shoseian” (Arbor of Murmuring Pines) by Dr. Soshitsu Sen, fifteenth Grand Master of the centuries-old Urasenke Foundation of Japan.

In 2020, the Seattle Japanese Garden has one of the most robust tea ceremony programs in North America. Weekend public tea ceremonies are hosted by three local tea organizations: Urasenke Tankokai, Omotesenke, and Chaboshu.

- *Volunteer legacy (1967–Present)*

Arboretum Foundation **volunteer Unit 86**—the Prentice Bloedel Unit—formed in 1967 to recruit the Japanese Garden’s tour guides, give daily tours, actively fundraise for special projects, and provide assistance for the Garden’s annual cycle of cultural events. They proudly continue to provide this support today.

A new generation of volunteer stewards—the **Niwashi**—was formed in 2016 to provide Parks horticulturists with help caring for the Garden.

- *New entry gatehouse (2007–09)*

A major infrastructure improvement came in 2009 with the construction of a new **gatehouse building complex**, which gave the Garden the world-class entrance it deserved. Designed by Hoshide Williams, Architects, and Nakano Associates, Landscape Architects, the complex featured an elegant courtyard, new restrooms and maintenance facilities, a meeting room, and bronze gates created by sculptor Gerard Tsutakawa.

Dedicated volunteers, in partnership with the Arboretum Foundation, helped coordinate the fundraising effort for the new gatehouse, with project management by Seattle Parks and Recreation. Project design and construction totaled \$1.25 million, which included \$450,000 in funds from the 2008 Parks and Green Space Levy.

