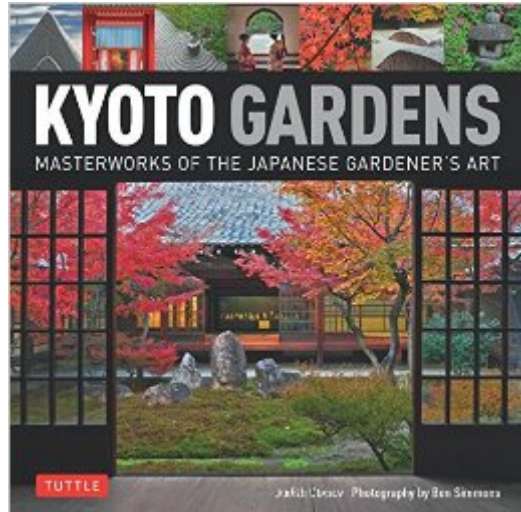


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# Kyoto Gardens: Masterworks Of The Japanese Gardener's Art



## Synopsis

"Bring the art and beauty of Japan to your garden with inspiration from Kyoto Gardens." —HGTV Gardens  
Featuring beautiful Japanese garden photography and insightful writing, *Kyoto Gardens* is a labor of love from master photographer Ben Simmons and Kyoto-based writer Judith Clancy. In their rocks and plants, empty spaces and intimate details—*Kyoto's* gardens manifest a unique ability to provoke thought and delight in equal measure. These varied landscapes meld the sensuality of nature with the disciplines of cosmology, poetry and meditation. Japanese aristocrats created these gardens to display not just wealth and power, but cultural sensitivity and an appreciation for transcendent beauty. A class of professional gardeners eventually emerged, transforming Japanese landscape design into a formalized art. Today, *Kyoto's* gardens display an enormous range of forms—from rock gardens display of extreme minimalism and subtle hues, to stroll gardens of luscious proportions and vibrant colors. In *Kyoto Gardens* Simmons' photographs present a fresh and contemporary look at *Kyoto's* most important gardens. Their beauty is enhanced and humanized by gardeners tending the grounds using the tools of their art. Clancy's graceful text provides historic, aesthetic and cultural context to the Japanese gardens. Combining wonder and rigor, she describes how *Kyoto's* most beloved gardens remain faithful to their founders' creative spirit and conception. Journey to *Kyoto's* thirty gardens with just a turn of a page, or use the handy maps to plan your trip.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I've looked at many books on Japanese gardens over the years but none distills their essence

as perfectly as this gem. Simmons has an unerring eye for the telling detail. A slow turtle on a stone path to a Zen garden is a visual haiku in its own right. The towering shadow of a small child viewing the raked sand at Daisen-in reveals itâ™s late on a winter afternoon, and captures the drama of a passing instant. Because Simmonsâ™ lens shows the spontaneous human moments in these formal, stylised landscapes â” from snap-happy tourists to caretaking monks â” gardens that have been photographed countless times over the years appear in a completely new, and very humanised, aspect. He and the graceful writer, long-time Kyoto resident Judith Clancy, also take you beyond the well-worn routes to lesser-known places. Everyone visits the world-famous Ryoan-ji rock garden, but Simmons and Clancy introduce the mossy paths and exquisite pond found on the grounds of the temple as well. If you are new to Japanese gardens, you canâ™t find a better introduction. If youâ™ve been visiting them for many years, this book illuminates them in ways rarely seen. Highly recommended.

Kyoto Gardens is a companion book to Ben Simmons and Judith Clancyâ™s 2013 book, *Kyoto: City of Zen*. In similar fashion to the previous book â” there are equal parts of inspiration and education. The photos capture both the expansive landscapes of the gardens and the poignant stillness that we each hope to witness in these exquisite places. You can appreciate the skill of Simmonsâ™s photography â” the images place you at eye level, as if you are walking through the gardens, looking down at the stone paths or across the water. Really lovely, and subtle. (See his book *Tokyo Desire* for another angle on his artistry.) Clancyâ™s text explains the intent of the gardens and the methodology â” distilling a very complex subject down for us to grasp the basics. The inclusion of maps for each of the regions is useful as an orienting tool â” not as a guidebook but to see the regional relationships and a bit of wayfinding. The size of the book is as intimate as the subject â” perfect for tucking into a backpack or leaving on your desk for a bit of wishful traveling.

From its first lines, where Clancy envisions a winged dinosaur soaring over ancient Japan, it is evident that this is an unusual book from a singular writer. This tour of some of Kyoto's most remarkable gardens is a banquet of color, texture, and ideas--as well as a wish list for those lucky enough to visit that jewel of a city. Part of the credit goes, of course, to Ben Simmons' sumptuous photos. But the spirit is Clancy's. As an American living in Japan, she is in a unique position to interpret these amazing places for us. Somehow managing to be precise, intimate, and mysterious at the same time, these gardens are among the true jewels of human endeavor. (I imagine if

advanced aliens came to earth, they'd be interested most in J.S. Bach and Japanese garden art.) Highly recommended.

What a wonderful retreat from the stressful everyday world to open this book and immediately feel the tranquility and beauty of Kyoto Gardens. The reader is rewarded with illuminating text by Judith Clancy and gorgeously rich photographs by Ben Simmons. The chapters are organized by regions of Kyoto, with some accompanying maps for those who may be planning a trip or want more localized information. But even if you never leave home, the book offers an armchair vacation to a world where every leaf and stone counts! My only complaint is that the format should have been larger to do justice to the wonderful pictures!

An amazing book that captures the history, design and beauty of many of the impressive gardens throughout Kyoto. Having been to nearly all of the gardens described in the book, it's easy to see how well Ms. Clancy and Mr Simmons captured their beauty. The accompanying descriptions provide an understanding of the design and importance of each garden. If a person is looking for reasons to visit Kyoto and it's many gardens, this book is it. What a great publication.....

I wish I was better versed in this fine art--literally a fine art. What looks effortless is achieved by a deep aesthetic and careful gardening over time. The gardeners maintain the shapes conceived by the original designers, painting with gravel, stones, moss, foliage, trees, bamboo, as well as perspective, concepts such as asymmetry and sounds such as water. Rain and snow and seasonal color by flowers or fall leaves also enter the picture. Gardens were and are for contemplation and strolling, but also as a focus of concentration such as raking patterns in gravel, a physical articulation of religious concepts. In a sense they are uniquely Japanese, but as I viewed these photos, I was reminded of photographs of an Appalachian spring. I suspect that for Japanese visiting these gardens, the experience is something like visiting the great Gothic cathedrals in Europe is for others, a calming and contemplative activity (at its best, my guess is tourists with phone cams may sometimes muddy the concepts). Kyoto gardens still have the majesty of time, and this book allows an armchair traveler like me to get a taste.

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