

# *Normandale Japanese Garden Newsletter*

April 2014 – Volume XXV



*Introducing*  
***A New Celebration of  
the Japanese Garden***

*Saturday, June 14th, 2014*

***Also in this issue:***

*A beautiful new book documenting  
the garden's history*

*Expanded possibilities for garden  
weddings and other private events*

*Newfound fame—the MapWorks III  
art exhibition*

*New additions to the garden*

*Honors for the Normandale Cherry Tree*

*Meet the garden committee's new members*

# Welcome

Like many of you, I have a long history with the garden's Old Sukiyaki Dinner fundraisers, beginning with my grandmother's work as a charter member of the Normandale Japanese Garden Committee, on which I now serve. When the college began extensive renovations to its campus in 2008, its facilities became unavailable for our event and a twenty-seven year tradition was put on indefinite hiatus. Fundraising for the garden was limited to private donations and rental of the space for weddings and photo shoots. But you never stopped asking "when is the next Sukiyaki Dinner?"

Three years ago, I was offered a chance to join the committee by family friend Shirley Huskins. I accepted, with an eye toward bringing the event back to the community that had made it such a success, and elevating the garden from its status as a "hidden jewel" of Bloomington. But even with completion of construction on the Normandale campus, we discovered and had to deal with a number of maintenance issues in the garden itself before we could consider putting on a new benefit for the garden.

So I personally consider it a pleasure and an honor (and might have strong-armed the committee into letting me write this article) to announce that this is the year our fundraiser is coming back: Saturday, June 14th will see the launch of the 2014 *Nihon Teien Matsuri*—Japanese Garden Festival— at Normandale Community College.

After several years away, I know this is not going to be the same event we all remember. The cost of quality ingredients has risen, and we can no longer bring our own volunteer labor into the new Kopp Student Center kitchen as we've done throughout the history of our event. As a result, we recognized we could not bring you the sukiyaki of years past, at the quality you remember, at a price that keeps our event accessible while still benefiting the garden. But we've been fortunate to have on our committee Patty Wiberg, in charge of the Normandale kitchen and with years of experience in Japanese cuisine. Patty has created for us a bento box-style meal to be served at the event. This will face stiff competition from our collective nostalgia for what has come before, but I believe it will stand on its own as we launch our new endeavor.

But then, the food was still only one half of our old fundraiser. As we change up the menu, we're also building on the entertainment aspect of the event. Our longtime partners, the drummers of Kogen Taiko and dancers of Sansei-Yonsei Kai, will be returning to perform for you. We're adding martial arts demonstrations, including Toyama Ryu Japanese swordsmanship (of which I'll be part), and archery by the Minnesota Kyudo Federation. Another steady partner in our efforts, the Twin Cities Japanese-American Citizens League, will be a part of our boutique shopping experience. New friends of the garden, Sajous Photography, will be on hand to take pictures of our big day (we encourage you to come out in your best Japanese dress!) And we're continuing to work behind the scenes to bring you more of the cultural, martial and popular arts of Japan.

I am truly excited to share the news of this event with you. From all of us on the committee, I hope you'll come join us. I hope you'll be patient with us and offer your feedback as we try on something a little different. But above all, I hope you'll enjoy this day in the company of people who share your love of Japan and its culture.

Read on for more information about our event and other goings-on in the garden.

– TJ Hara



*Contributors to this volume:* Cece Cope, Roma Foti, TJ Hara, Shirley Huskins, Carole Kulak, Kerry Muerhoff, Joe Poell, Kari Simonson, Val Wagner, Joe Waldoch, Ben Wong

Visit the Normandale Japanese Garden on the internet:  
[www.normandale.edu/japanesegarden](http://www.normandale.edu/japanesegarden) | [www.facebook.com/normandalejapanesegarden](https://www.facebook.com/normandalejapanesegarden)

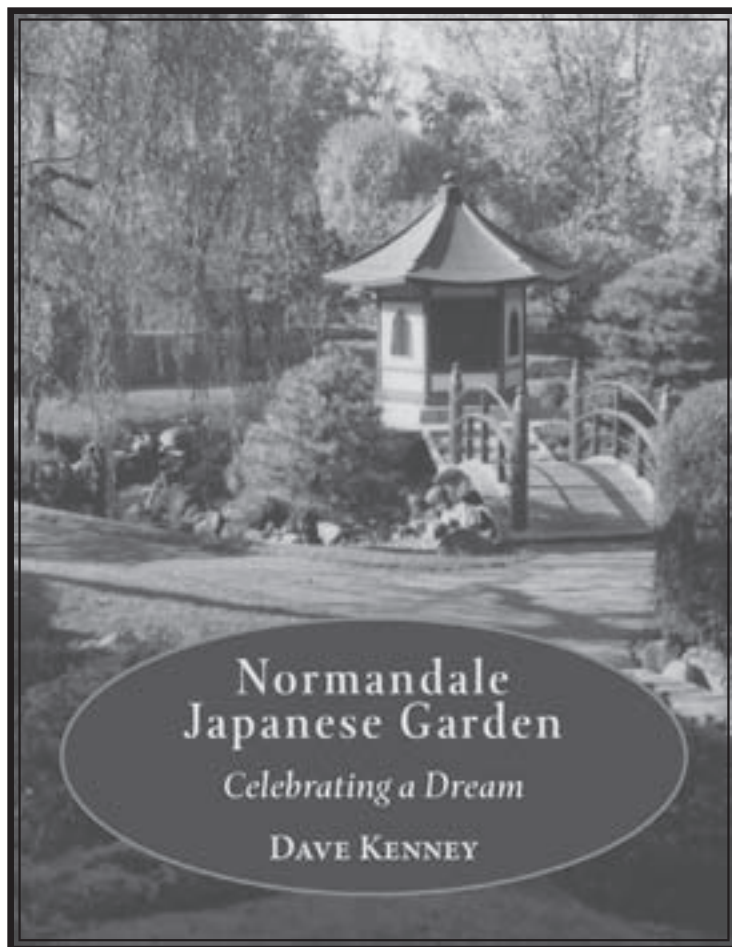
## *A History of the Japanese Garden, Now In Print*

All of you have had moments, experiences, or extraordinary and memorable events in your life which you would not want forgotten. The Normandale Japanese Garden Committee began thinking about this almost a year ago. We did not want the experiences and contributions that made this special garden what it is today to be forgotten by the thousands who have walked its paths. For those who have yet to discover it, we would entice you to visit by sharing those stories.

And so now we are in the midst of publishing, in cooperation with Nodin Press, *Normandale Japanese Garden—Celebrating a Dream*, a history of this very special garden. From an initial \$500 award to beautify the then-developing city of Bloomington to the serene space that it has become today, you can follow the garden's story in this captivating book. Deepen your appreciation of the artistry and the individual features that cause you to walk a little slower and pause a little longer at each point of interest on your journey through our two-acre paradise.

This book, featuring colorful pictures taken in all seasons over the years, captures the intricate beauty of what was carved out of Marsh Pond nearly forty years ago. Delight your eyes and imagine the quiet tranquility that is felt while strolling its paths and taking in all of the natural beauty. Learn the history of our authentic Japanese Cherry Tree, the seed which was brought here from Hokkaido and for over 20 years has survived our harsh Minnesota winters.

You will find much to learn, enjoy, and love as you read this historic volume. It will be available about June 1, in time for our Japanese Garden Festival on June 14. To preorder the book at a special price and receive a beautiful glossy 8" x 10" photo of the garden suitable for framing, call Pat Kirsch at 612-866-5322, or Bunnie Aaze at 952-831-4479. For additional information, visit Nodin Press at [www.nodinpress.com](http://www.nodinpress.com).



## *With Gratitude to Our Donors*

While our annual sukiyaki dinner of past years and other fundraising efforts have helped us meet our annual maintenance expenses, private donations and memorials have allowed us to meet the costs of capital items that are in need of replacement from time to time.

Replacing trees (which thankfully doesn't occur often), repairing the shelter roofs, mending the stream and pond embankments, sprinkling system, waterfall containments—all when they are required for maximum efficiency, are costly items. Contributors have eased the burden when such expenses are straining our treasury. We are most thankful when these gifts arrive in the mail without any request. These are people and organizations that know the garden and want to assist in maintaining it in its pristine condition. Needless to say, we are indeed grateful for their generosity and thoughtfulness. Without mentioning names—you know who you are—we extend to you all a sincere and heartfelt THANK YOU.

## Committee News

The garden is successful because of the talented people who have served on the committee. Roma Foti helped with this newsletter, contributing to the design of the cover. Gail Wong “provided” her husband Ben, who did the drawings of the Bentendo and bridge. Other drawings of the garden have been done by the late Don Waldoch for our self-guided tour brochure. Kathy Hara will be overseeing ticket sales for our festival.

The new recruits to the committee are already lending their time and talents, and have shared some of their reasons for joining our group.

### **Cece Cope** (joined in 2014)

Relocated to the Twin Cities from Houston twenty-five years ago, Cece teaches middle school science at Carondelet Catholic School and taught for ten years in Texas public schools before that. While raising a family, she has made time for other interests, including church choir, volunteering at various nature centers and active membership in the Sierra Club and Audubon Society. As a teacher, she’s had the opportunity to involve her students in a number of environmental service projects, and has organized many field trips, including a week-long annual trip to Camp Widjiwagan in Ely.

### **Carole Kulak** (joined in 2014)

Carole is a retired social studies teacher and long-time employee of Braemar Golf Course, as the director of ornamental landscaping. Her mother was chairperson of Nine Mile Creek Watershed (of which the college grounds are a part) and a long time member of the Bloomington Garden Clubs, which helped establish the original plantings of the Japanese Garden.

### **Kari Simonson** (joined in 2014)

The Japanese Garden has been a part of Kari’s life for as long as she can remember—there are pictures of her as a 4 year-old hauling brush to help build the dam separating the garden from the marshland beyond. Her mother Sondra was instrumental in getting landscape architect Takao Watanabe to volunteer his time to design and oversee construction of the garden. As a result, she has many memories of him staying at their home on visits here, during which she learned about Japanese culture. Growing up, she spent many weekends helping with various garden-related tasks, including picking up goose droppings and waiting tables at the Sukiyaki Dinner (never both in the same day). Now living in Minneapolis with her husband and two children, she’s happy to be involved in the garden again, helping to plan the new fundraiser.

### **Kerry Boedeker Muerhoff** (joined in 2013)

A Bloomington resident since 1988, Kerry came to Minnesota after graduating from Iowa State University, and now works in the field of banking. Having grown up on a northeast Iowa diversified farm, she had a natural interest in taking care of her own yard’s trees and plantings. Her son having attended Normandale, the offer to work with the committee appealed to her love of nature and the fun of fundraising for worthy causes.

### **Joe Poell** (joined in 2012)

Joe has volunteered in various Japanese Garden fundraising activities since joining the Normandale administration in 2000. He sold and marketed tickets for past Sukiyaki Dinner and Aki Matsuri events and helped with set-up, waiting tables, cooking and dishing up sukiyaki alongside many supporters of the garden over the years. Since his retirement from Normandale, he has continued to support and promote our jewel of nature. His extensive relationships at the college have proven invaluable to the committee, and his background as administrator for the Kopp Student Center has proven especially valuable as we prepare for the upcoming festival.

### **TJ Hara** (joined in 2011)

TJ grew up with the Sukiyaki Dinner due to his grandmother Kimi, and later his parents Tom and Kathy’s involvement with the event. His work with the committee unofficially began at the ticket desk at past fundraisers alongside Pat Kirsch, George Nishida and Min Tsuchimochi (in between games of Spy Hunter in the old student center lounge, and breaks to watch Kogen Taiko perform). A Normandale graduate, he now works as a prepress Mac operator for Western Graphics printing in St. Paul and studies Toyama Ryu batto jutsu Japanese swordsmanship, holding black belt ranks in the Japanese Toyama Federation and the U.S. Batto Federation. He has served as the committee’s secretary since May of 2013, and this year somehow found himself chairing its new fundraising event.



## *New Members Welcome*

These members' reasons for joining the committee are representative of most members' motivations. Family tradition, interest in gardening (weeders are much-loved!), the enjoyment of Japanese gardens and the desire to learn more about them, supporting a community fixture or making the time to work with others with similar interests are all welcome reasons. Not all of our members live in Bloomington: Minneapolis, Mendota Heights, Richfield, Burnsville and Coon Rapids are all represented on the committee. If you would like to help support the garden, we welcome your involvement. Contact committee chair Val Wagner at [clayscomp@comcast.net](mailto:clayscomp@comcast.net) to learn more!

## *Expert Garden Care*

We are fortunate to have college staff members who are dedicated to the spirit as well as the maintenance of the garden. Jon Hanson, Building and Grounds Services Director, and Sam Kaufmann, Horticulturist, show great diligence in keeping the garden well-tended. Sam works on pruning year-round—the crabapples, pines and willows require frequent and precise attention to maintain their size and shape; the rest of the plantings are a little less demanding, but still time-consuming. Their expert work is appreciated by all of us.

## *A Japanese Garden's Work is Never Done...*

Thanks to your support, we have been able to fight Mother Nature and Father Time—they have conspired to require some major work in the garden. Nature's wear and tear makes it necessary to replace the cedar shingles on various structures in the garden from time to time. The round shelter was done in 2008, the square shelter and entrance gate in 2013.

In 2009 the entrance gate and walkway needed a facelift due to deterioration. The gate and framework were rebuilt using cedar and ipé, which should last many years. The old walkway inside the gate was made of smooth river rocks set in concrete; as the rocks began coming loose, that area was replaced with flagstone. Carpenter ants and peeling paint have plagued the Bentendo and bridges for many years, and the ants proved more permanent than the periodic fixes. In 2011, much of the Bentendo and bridge posts were rebuilt using ipé, a wood so hard and dense that it should prevent further ant damage. While the bridges were dismantled for this work, they were repainted as well. Much of the painting was done inside where rain and humidity would not affect the finished appearance.

In 2013 the approaches to the flat bridge were raised level to the edge of the bridge deck, making wheelchair use easier. The boulder retaining wall on the north end was redone and strengthened.

Another big replacement was a recirculating pump for the waterfall. There had been at least fifteen years of patching and struggling to keep the old one working. The new one now moves 14,000 gallons of water per hour in and out of the pond. Even better, it rests in a vault close enough to shore that it no longer requires a duck boat, an oarsman and a pump "hugger" to move it.

More pond news—the staff has gotten control of the algae and other problem plants. The right combination of environmentally safe chemicals has eliminated the need to rake the unsightly mess out each week. We can now see the koi again!

## *Ahead in 2014*

The garden was built in a marshy area, which causes settling and other problems, two of which will be addressed this year. The waterfall bed has been leaking for a number of years, causing the soil to wash away beneath the boulders holding the path in place. The cracks in the stream bed have been patched periodically since 2000. The entire bed will now be repaired and sealed.

The second large maintenance job for the year will be Turtle Island. The posts hiding the sheet piling need to be lowered. Existing boulders have sunk and must be raised and reset. River rock and more boulders will be added, as will more plants.

## *Future Needs*

The boulders on the pond shoreline are sinking, making them look much smaller than they really are. In order to correct this, the boulders must be pulled up and more river rock brought in. A seemingly simple job, the cost on this will be steep, as it involves lifting literally hundreds of boulders!

The ongoing attention to the care of the garden, made possible through your contributions, has resulted in a garden now valued at over one million dollars. Thank you.

## Weddings

If you are looking for a natural, outdoor setting for your wedding or commitment ceremony, the Japanese Garden is exactly what you are looking for. The gated garden—featuring a waterfall and koi pond, bridges and stone lanterns, Bentendo and shelters—provides the solemn serenity and nature’s freshness to the celebration of your “I Do”s. The garden is a genuine paradise to make a part of your glorious day. After your promise of love, witnessed by family and friends, retreat to the newly-remodeled Kopp Center for light refreshments, hors d’oeuvres and reception, cutting of the cake and opening gifts, or wedding luncheon, dinner, dancing or catered bar. Make it as simple, as elegant, as formal or extravagant as you desire.

The Japanese Garden at Normandale has been celebrated by WCCO 4 and Kare 11 as one of their top spots in the Twin Cities. Its location is easy to get to from Interstate 494 or 35W to France Avenue and 98th Street. Come for a visit and see why the Japanese Garden at Normandale boasts a tradition of hundreds of weddings performed on its grounds!

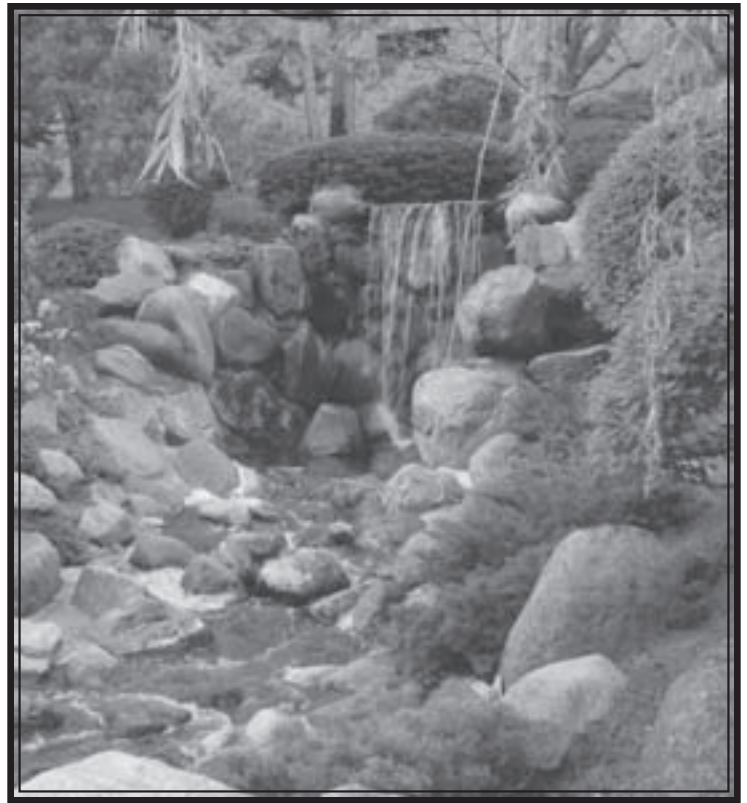
To reserve the Japanese Garden for your wedding and reception, contact Gloria Robinson at 952-358-8797.

## In the Spotlight— MapWorks

The garden was honored as one of eight Bloomington landmarks represented at MapWorks III at the Bloomington Theater and Art Center. Six artists presented their views of each of the eight locations at an exhibition that ran from August 30 through October 4. The preview party was a great opportunity to promote greater awareness of the garden to a new audience. A photo display showed many beautiful views of the garden and shared some of its history and the importance of its hundreds of volunteers and donors.

Dale Brown, photography instructor at Normandale College, took the impressive pictures showing panoramic views of the garden as well as close-ups of many of its features, including the koi and stone lanterns. A show-stopper was the winter view of the Bentendo and bridges.

Using Brown’s photos as inspiration, the Normandale Art Department presented *Art of the Japanese Garden* in the Fine Arts gallery of the college. In addition to the photos, there were drawings and paintings done by staff and students—the garden is frequently used for art classes, so some of their work was shown, as well.



## Friends of the Garden: The Bloomington-Izumi Sister City Organization

In addition to his work with the garden committee, Joe Waldoch is a Normandale College staff member as well as a five-year board member and current president of the Bloomington Sister City Organization, connecting with its Japanese counterpart, Izumi City. BSCO promotes international understanding through exchanges of people, information, and ideas. Such activities include Kite Day each May at Valley View Play Field and exchanging marathon runners for the Twin Cities and Izumi marathons. Learn more about the work of these friends of the garden at [www.bloomington-izumi.org](http://www.bloomington-izumi.org).

## *Awesome Additions*

Two elements of Takao Watanabe's original plan long missing from the garden—cherry trees within the garden's borders and a stucco wall on the south side of the garden—have been added in recent years.

### *Cherry Trees*

Watanabe-san was disappointed that there were no cherry trees that were hardy enough to bloom in Minnesota. He mentioned this to Roland Jefferson of the National Arboretum, who had collected seeds from Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost island. In 1984 Jefferson sent twenty-four tiny seedlings to Normandale College, which came to be nurtured by Bob Waldoch. One tree proved to have the ideal shape and hardiness, and most importantly an abundance of beautiful pink blossoms. Lynn Friefeld was then instrumental in getting it propagated by Bailey's Wholesale Nursery. It is now sold in garden centers across the United States and Canada as Spring Wonder. Normandale Japanese Garden is paid a royalty for each tree sold, helping us continue to care for the garden. The "mother" tree is planted just outside the garden in a prominent place. Seven of these trees have now been planted in the garden, fulfilling part of Watanabe-san's vision.

Spring Wonder gained international recognition in June of 2012 when the government of Japan presented a commendation to the Japanese Garden Committee for its efforts in making a cherry tree available to areas that would otherwise be too cold to support them.

The commendation reads:

*For many years, your committee has made a tremendous contribution to the deepening of our Japan-United States relationship and to promoting mutual understanding between our two countries through your great activities with cherry trees, the symbol of our country.*

*Commemorating the centennial anniversary of the gift of cherry trees from Japan to the United States this year, I pay you my deepest respect and commend your outstanding achievement.*

*Signed: Koichiro Gemba, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan*

### *Stucco Wall*

A stucco wall was built by the college in 2011 that replaced the old chain link fence, removed when the college renovated the activities building south of the garden. It is an extension of the original wall, following Watanabe-san's plan, with the addition of wooden panels that now provide glimpses into the garden and invite you to come discover more.

Stucco walls of this type traditionally provide privacy and a sense of enclosure to Japanese gardens. Our wall strengthens the feeling of peace and serenity, while blocking out the distraction of people outside moving between the activities building and student center.

### *In Addition...*

#### *Arborvitae Screen*

Thirty-two arborvitae were planted along the east side of the garden to hide from view maintenance facilities placed in the southeast corner outside of the garden. They also offer some help in reducing the noise from France Avenue. Although this screen planting was not in the original plan, it was needed because of recent development. Arborvitae was chosen because it is an often-used plant in the garden as well as being good for hedging.

#### *New Signage*

The new Japanese Garden sign on the newsletter cover is based upon recently-erected signs installed near the northwest corner of the new Partnership Center building. Visible from the parking lot, they help direct to the garden first-time visitors, as well as long-time friends of the garden encountering this new addition to the campus for the first time. Wording has also been added to the campus signage on 98th Street and Collegeview Avenue pointing visitors in the right direction.





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Japanese Garden

*Celebrating a Dream*

DAVE KENNEY