

Nurtured by Nature: How Gardens Support our Bodies and Minds





"When we are surrounded by nature, a feeling of comfort comes over us and our bodies become relaxed. Most of us would intuitively recognize this feeling, but until recently we haven't had any evidence to prove it."

Y O S H I F U M I M I Y A Z A K I

Excerpt from his book, *Shinrin Yoku*

Japanese gardens lend themselves well to the health benefits of spending time in nature. They are designed to capture natural elements in their ideal form, which creates captivating and safe natural spaces for contemplation and tranquility. Some garden styles, such as the Strolling Pond Garden and Natural Garden, were designed specifically to offer visitors a place of respite - places where one can let their stresses fall away surrounded by the beauty of nature.

Improve Your Concentration

Wandering through a garden renews your ability to stay focused. Researchers at the University of Melbourne found that looking at natural vegetation restores a person's attention span (Lee, et al. 2015).

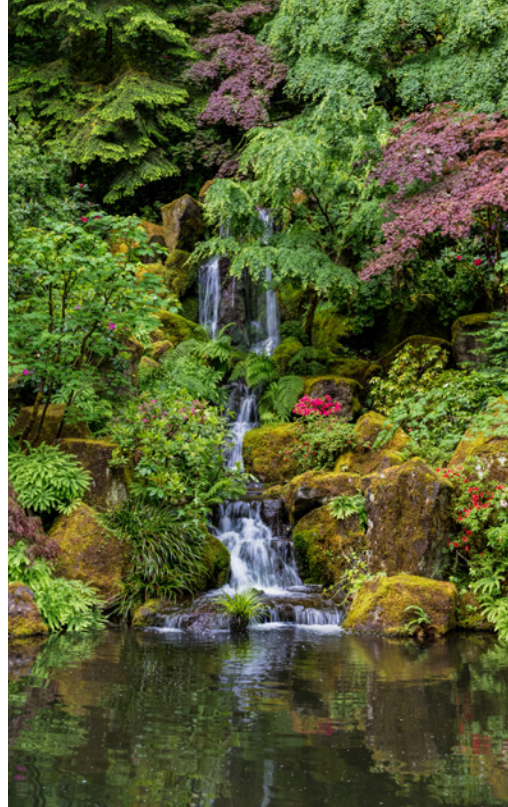
A recent study found that groups who walked in the woods for a brief period showed a 20 percent improvement on memory tests, while those who walked down a city street did not have any considerable improvement whatsoever (Bratman, et al. 2015).

While walking in the Portland Japanese Garden, allow your mind to wander freely as you observe seasonal elements. No matter the time of year, the Garden offers captivating scenery such as the vibrant fall colors of the Japanese Lace Leaf Maple in Autumn, or the reflection of the Snow Viewing Lantern against the water during the winter.

Give Your Immune System a Boost

Various essential oils – emitted by plants and trees as a way to protect against germs and insects –not only make us feel refreshed. Breathing in these oils can improve our immune system health (Li et al. 2009).

There exists a wide variety of trees inside our Japanese garden. Pause to breathe in the subtle aroma of Japanese Pines, as well as the scent of some Northwest natives such as Douglas Firs and Western Red Cedar trees. Notice how fresh the air smells as you walk through our Natural Garden enshrouded by trees. On a rainy day, draw in the rich, earthy smell of damp moss and earth that lingers in the air.

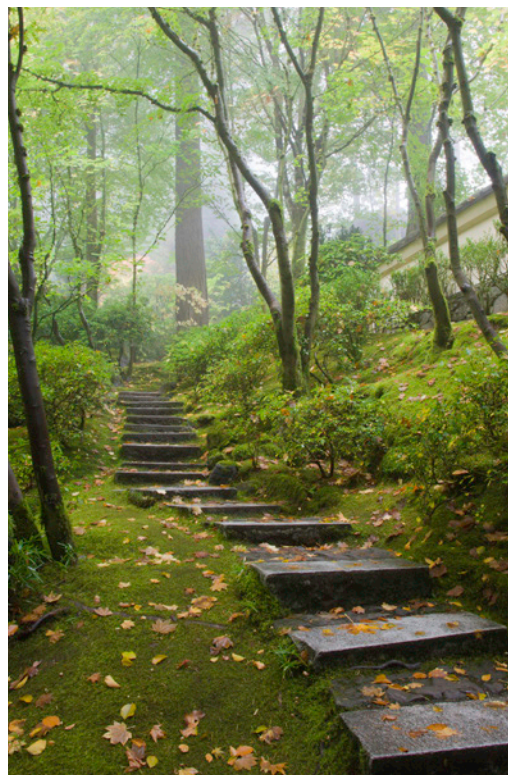


Feel Less Stress and Anxiety

Strolling through the lush greenery of a Japanese garden can have relaxing effects. Several studies at Japanese Universities found that spending time in nature significantly reduces stress levels (Park et al. 2010).

Researchers at University of Sussex found that listening to the sounds of nature, (e.g. water falling) increases a feeling of serenity. Nature sounds can also decrease a feeling of “fight or flight” (Praag et al. 2017).

As you walk through the Garden, gaze upon our Upper and Lower Ponds. Stop for a moment and close your eyes. Let the sound of Heavenly Falls soothe and relax you. Contemplate the expanse of the Sand and Stone Garden and hear the wind rustling through the trees. Let the sounds you hear wash away stress and anxiety.



In Japanese gardens, pathways are winding and uneven to slow down your pace, and help you become immersed in the landscape. Whether it's walking along the moss and leaves along the *nobedan* (stone) pathways or slowing down along the zig-zag bridge to watch the *koi*, the paths beneath your feet may change, shift direction, or become more rustic. Allow them to lead you into the present moment, to truly experience the benefits our Garden has to offer.



For questions or more information on this topic, contact marketing@japanesegarden.org.

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