

DIFFICULTIES IN INSTALLING A JAPANESE GARDEN

DIFICULTĂȚI ÎN REALIZAREA UNEI GRĂDINI JAPONEZE

CAMELIA IFRIM

Botanical Garden “Anastasiu Fatu”
of University “Al. I. Cuza” Iassy

Abstract: Close to other specific Japanese arts (*origami*, *cha-no-yu*), the art of setting up gardens represents a quintessence where philosophy plays the main role. The installation of a Japanese garden acts like a provocation for the European man. Choosing and using the vegetal material, ligneous material especially, which does not often resist in our climatic conditions, represent one of the first difficulties. Another difficulty regards the building and the usage of the decorative elements, especially the most perishable ones (lanterns and lamps). Impregnating the “air” specific to the oriental extreme represents a difficulty, which constitutes the most important provocation for the one who builds the garden, but the one that offers important satisfactions, too.

Rezumat: Alături de celelalte arte specific japoneze (*origami*, *cha-no-yu*) și arta amenajării grădinilor este o chintesență în care locul principal îl are filosofia. Realizarea unei grădini japoneze reprezintă o provocare pentru un european.

O primă dificultate o reprezintă alegerea și utilizarea materialului vegetal, în special lemnos, care deseori nu rezistă în condițiile climatice de la noi. Altă dificultate este legată de realizarea și valorificarea elementelor de decor, în special cele ușor perisabile (lanterne și lampioane). Impregnarea aerului specific extremului orient este o dificultate ce constituie cea mai mare provocare pentru cel care realizează grădina, dar și cea care oferă satisfacții deosebite.

The Far East has always charmed the Europeans with its fascinating arts: the art of flower arrangement (*ikebana*), the ancient Japanese art of paper folding (*origami*) and the ancient art of aesthetic miniaturization of trees (*bonsai*). Creating a garden that follows the rules of the Japanese masters is both an art and a strong challenge.

Powerful symbols in the Far East, the Japanese gardens often lose their purpose when being recreated. Perhaps, that's the reason we should consider what a Japanese designer said: we speak about Japanese gardens in Japan, and about gardens in Japanese style in the rest of the world.

Japanese gardens contain vegetation, rocks, water, but what shows the craftsmanship of the craftsman is the way these elements are put together.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The plants that are traditionally used are native to Asia. It's quite difficult to use plants under the climate conditions of Iasi. The late April – May frosts can cause severe damage to the young plants. Another problem, in recent years, is the prolonged drought. The frost damages the deciduous trees and the drought damages the coniferous trees.

Among the coniferous trees (and gymnosperms, in general), the species of *Thuja* and *Chamaecyparis*, *Ginkgo biloba* resist quite well. But the species of *Cryptomeria japonica* and *Sciadopitys verticillata*, live for a few years, so it's not advisable to use them.

For the species of deciduous trees affected by the harsh winter conditions, it is necessary to be used a sheltered place, either a building, or a long – leafed plant of small woods, preferably of coniferous trees. Besides, they function as a background for either the beauty of the flowers, or the coloured foliage.

The star magnolia can be found in each Japanese gardens, and the reason is the beauty of the flowers. They are sensitive, in the first years of life. *Magnolia Kobus* tolerates the limestone soil, and *Magnolia stellata*, that has many flowers in its first years of life, likes to live in the sheltered, sunny places, because the strong wind, rain and frost can damage the flowers. It is best to grow this kind of magnolia in small gardens as it is 5 m high.

The Japanese maple are famous, but their sensitivity to unfavourable climate conditions is well – known, too. *Acer palmatum* [5] and the species with ornamental leaves are very sensitive as well. They best grow in places protected against the north and east winds, a light rain and rich in humus soil. The kinds of Red Maple and the kinds with lobed leaves are more sensitive than the species. *Acer triflorum*, a brightly red coloured species, from Asia, prefers high humid areas and balanced climate.

In the case of *Acer* species, we can replace the well – known ornamental subspecies with the variegated ones from *Acer negundo* or we can use a less known but more resistant species, *Acer ginnala*. The *semenovii* variety of *Acer tataricum* species, from Turkistan and Tian Shan, is very beautifully red coloured in autumn [1].

An everywhere symbol in Japan is the Japanese cherry tree. Of the species of *Prunus*, we grow *P. armeniaca*, *P. glandulosa*, *P. japonica*, *P. serrulata*, *P. triloba* [4], most in our country. The countless number of “Japanese cherry trees” worshiped in The Land of The Rising Sun are varieties of *P. serrulata* species. The varieties with double or semi-doubled flowers, and whose flowers last longer

are preferably used. Most of the time, these trees do not live for too many years, because they suffer from the late spring frosts or from the extremely severe winters. Besides these species, they sometimes grow *P. cerasifera* var. *pissardii* for the rust – coloured foliage, and because it's more rustic.

The willow species are quite easy to multiply and to maintain. The most valued kind is *Salix matsudana* 'Tortuosa' which, besides *Salix babylonica* and *S. purpurea*, is often grown in areas near water such as lakes, pools, etc.

Sophora japonica, best preferred as the cultivar 'Pendula', requires attention in its first years of life, when the radicle system is fragile and it can be damaged by the late frosts. It likes a deep, fertile, rich in limestone soil, which allows to be planted near the falls made of limestone.

Albizia julibrissin is a species with a difference, admired, and planted for its delicate inflorescence. It is extremely sensitive and it is recommended to be planted only in very sheltered interior gardens.

The rhododendron species is native to Far East. *Rhododendrom dauricum* resists very well to our climate conditions [6]. It requires a specific protection during winter time, then we can enjoy the beauty of its light violet petals in March – April. If the freezing temperatures can damage it in its first years, the severe dryness can damage it later in its life. That's why it is recommended it should be watered during prolonged droughts. Other species pretty resistant are *R. luteum* (from Caucaz), *R. mucronulatum* (from Eastern Asia), *R. schlippenbachii*, also known as 'royal azalea', native to Korea and Manchuria, resists well to the winter frost, but it is sensitive to the spring frost. Of the species with long – lasting foliage, *R. smirnovii* is more rustic, the species is native to Turkey and Caucaz. It is interesting for both the pink – purple flowers that bloom in spring and the young offshoot with dark hues.

Cornus kousa requires a slightly silicious soil. The hard soil must be avoided because the trunk doesn't grow nicely and it doesn't have nicely coloured leaves in autumn. To increase the colouring in autumn, potassium is added in September [1]. The young trees obtained from seeds and cuttings can blossom in 7 or 15 years' time. The young trees obtained by grafting blossom in 2-3 years' time.

A less used species, but it's worth the attention is *Enkianthus campanulatus*, an elegant shrub with its red flowers and leaves in autumn, but quite rustic.

Of the *Euonymus* species with falling leaves, *E. alatus* stands out, with an exquisite carmine foliage in autumn, and *E. fortunei* is an evergreen shrub whose cultivars with variegated and ornamental leaves and it resists without any protection during wintertime.

A valuable species is *Viburnum fragrans* because it blossoms in winter, but the flowers can be damaged by the strong frosts.

Buxus microphylla is a rustic species, which supports both half shadow conditions and strong sun, both wet and dry soil. It can be re – planted, even at a

late age. It is ideal for being cut in different shapes, a highly appreciated custom by the Japanese.

Of the *Hydrangea* species, *H. paniculata* is the most rustic one and it can reach up to 10 m height. The *H. aspera*, *H. heteromalla*, *H. macrophylla* [4] species require a sheltered place and protection during wintertime.

The big flowers of the peony can decorate successfully a corner in the garden, but the shrub peonies are rather used, such as *Paeonia delavayi*, *P. lutea* or *P. suffruticosa*. They best grow in the same place, up to 50 years, so it is recommended this place should not be changed. But when it is absolutely necessary to do the change, it is best to do it in October or March. It is best to be grown in a sunny place, sheltered from the wind and it prefers a soil rich in nourishing, fertile substances and well drained.

A few kinds of *Skimmia japonica*, with ornamental flowers and leaves, are recommended for a rocky place. It is a less rustic species, which grows better towards the south or west, protected by the shadow of big trees.

When choosing the bamboo trees, one should be very careful to the rhythm of invasion of the species. A great many of species are rustic enough to resist, even though they suffer damages during the harsh winters. They recover quite quickly as the spring comes. The species of the *Sasa*, *Pseudosasa* kinds and a few of the *Pleioblastus* kinds are invasive and it is better to avoid their planting in small gardens.

The *Phyllostachys* kind has less invasive species, but the height reached by its kinds make it difficult to protect against the cold winds. The *Arundinaria murielae*, *Phyllostachys aurea*, *Pleioblastus variegates* and *Sinarundinaria nitida* are species with a highly appreciated foliage. But we ought to plant them in sheltered places.

In the gardens considered walking gardens, the moss is to be found everywhere. The severe drought during the summertime can make the maintenance of the moss quite difficult. It needs to be watered by spraying water, to compensate for the lack of rain. A compromise can be the use of *Soleirolia soleirolii*, a turf.

The climbing plants mostly used are and *Wisteria sinensis*. The later one needs to be trimmed carefully, both in summer and in winter, after they blossom, to get an abundant inflorescence.

The Japanese tradition prefers subtle green tones, but flowering trees and shrubs are used. Of the grassy plants, the anemones, the *Aster* species and chrysanthemums are preferred.

The distribution of vegetation must be done in such a way as to re – create nature. Another important symbolic aspect to be considered is the presence of the vegetation that has to mark the passing of the seasons, an essential cycle which is a symbol of life in itself. The vegetation in a Japanese garden must represent

spring (which corresponds to birth and youth), with shrubs that blossom in spring, summer (adult life), with falling species, autumn (old age) represented by the colours of the falling foliage, and, finally, winter, with long – lasting shrubs and trees, symbol of immortality and reincarnation.

The used species are well – known, being grown all over the world. The density, the diversity, the way they are combined create an exotic atmosphere and give a feeling of escape.

The water source must look like part of the natural surroundings, except for the traditional fountains. The meanders created by man must be winding and with irregularities as to look natural. The lanterns are often placed near a pool, as they represent the feminine and the masculine, water and fire.

There are two kinds of pools, the ornamental ones, *kazari – chozubachi*, placed next to the pavilion, and others, specific to the tea gardens, *tsukubai*.

The presence of the water evokes life. Thus, the source is a symbol of birth, a stream – a symbol of childhood, a pool or a fall – adolescence, and a swamp – old age. Ideally, the water runs from east towards south, then goes towards west, the curve thus created becomes the body of a dragon.

The third important element is the rock, which in the Japanese faith is invested with spirit. There are a great many ways to use rocks: for bridges, for pools, for falls, for alleys, for creating different symbols (a frog) or for their own beauty (in the case of dry gardens).

The specific paths, sometimes called “stepping stones” come originally from the tea ceremony. They have been created for not walking on the grass or moss and for redirecting the attention towards a specific visual experience. They often use granite other rocks, or even wooden pieces, to compensate for their lack. In the case of using pebbles, that have been fetched from somewhere else, the juxtaposition among the existing rocks must be made naturally. The natural rocks fetched from far away places must be carried carefully, as not to damage the marks made by time on them.

In the case of dry gardens, each pebble is placed according to its unique shape and size; some are placed horizontally, while others are placed vertically. Thus the symmetry in arranging pebbles is a common thing in the Japanese trees. In most cases, there is an odd number of pebbles and the most common shape of their arrangement is the triangle. The Japanese pay a great deal of attention to the harmony in arrangements which should give birth to **chi** energy [2].

The distinctive discretion of the Japanese architecture comes from respecting the three criteria of the so-called *zen*: *wabi*, the tranquility, the peacefulness, the bliss, *sabi*, the age patina, what has been lived, experimented, and *karumi*, the easiness, discretion, tact [3].

CONCLUSIONS

The most important elements in a Japanese gardens are vegetation, rocks, water; the art is the way these elements are put together.

The traditional species used in a Japanese garden are damaged in our climate conditions.

The use of rocks are made by strictly rules.

The distinctive discretion of the Japanese architecture comes from respecting the three criteria: *wabi*, *sabi*, and *karumi*.

REFERENCES

1. **Bleder de Jelena, Misonne X., 1994** - *Arbres et arbustes pour parcs et jardins*. Ed. Maison Rustique
2. **Constantinescu Viorica. 1992.** - *Arta grădinii*. Ed. Meridiane, București
3. **Elisseeff Vadime, Danielle Elisseeff. 1996** - *Civilizația japoneză*. Ed. Meridiane, Oradea
4. **Zander R., 1984** - *Handwörterbuch der Pflanzennamen*/Zander. R., Encke F., Buccheim G., Seybold S., 13 Aufl., Stuttgart: Verlag Eugen Ulmer
5. **Zanoschi V., Sârbu I. & Toniuc Angela, 1996**, - *Flora lemnoasă spontană și cultivată din România*, t. 1, Iași: Edit. "Glasul Bucovinei"
6. **Zanoschi V., Sârbu I. & Toniuc Angela, 2000-2004**, - *Flora lemnoasă spontană și cultivată din România*, t. 2-4, Iași: Edit. Univ. "Alexandru Ioan Cuza"