

The Hannah Carter Japanese Garden at UCLA represents an important chapter in the 135-year history of Japanese gardens—and Asian culture—in North America and in Southern California. It is the biggest and best private, residential garden built in America in the immediate post-war period and thus demonstrates the rapid embrace of Japanese culture in the wake of World War II. It also shows, for the time, a new sophistication in American domestic culture, in which garden styles including “California patio,” “Hawaiian tropical” and “Japanese teahouse” are combined into something that is distinctly American and wonderfully Californian.

The acquisition of the garden by UCLA demonstrates an important chapter in the history of the university—the desire to utilize a Japanese garden to give a layer of culture to a state university with little “culture.” This function of a Japanese garden to create a patina of civilization accords well with the construction of public Japanese gardens by other organizations. These groups include universities—University of British Columbia and University of Washington most notably—and by municipalities—including Portland, San Mateo and Spokane on the west coast.

The Carter garden is also important because it represent the garden design of two of the leading figures who created Japanese gardens in the mid-20th century. The garden was designed by Nagao Sakurai, who later created civic Japanese gardens in San Mateo and Spokane, as well as many leading private gardens. Sakurai was chosen by the Japanese government to built the Imperial Japanese Gardens for the 1939 international expositions in San Francisco and New York, and is a major figure in modern garden history. The Carter garden was one of the first gardens he made after emigrating to the US in the 1950s. It followed his restoration work on the famous Japanese tea garden in San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park. After a mudslide damaged the Carter Garden in 1968, redesign was directed by Koichi Kawana, a member of the UCLA facilities staff and life partner of UCLA Dean Carroll Parish. The Carter Garden was one of Kawana’s first projects, and helped launch his career. In the 1970s and 1980s he became the leading Japanese garden designer in North America, creating important gardens at the Memphis Botanic Garden, the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum near Minneapolis, the Missouri Botanic Garden in St. Louis, and the Chicago Botanic Garden. Locally, he created important Japanese gardens at the Tillman Water Reclamation facility in Van Nuys and at Lotusland in Montecito. Kawana is the only designer to receive a chapter in the forthcoming book *Japanese Gardens in North America* (Tuttle, 2012).

In recent years Japanese gardens in North America—and outside Japan more broadly-- have been recognized as important cultural properties. They are the subject of study by academics in Japan and around the world, and now the focus of a professional organization—the North American Japanese Garden Association. More importantly, recent research demonstrates the critical role of Japanese gardens in healing and wellness in addition to their long role in signaling cultural diversity. In line with these ideas, the Japanese gardens at the Huntington and Balboa Park are in the process of major expansions. At a time of such dramatic growth in the Japanese garden field, the decision of administrators at UCLA to remove their garden without

consulting specialists in the field is one that seems irresponsible. I urge those in charge to better study the Carter Garden, how it may better serve the UCLA campus community as well as the citizens of Southern California. If, after deliberate and transparent study as well as public discussion, a decision is reached to destroy the garden, then proper documentation of the garden, and transfer of its constituent parts should be carried out in concert with acknowledged specialists and advocacy groups. In short, UCLA should handle the Hannah Carter Japanese Garden in a manner befitting the university's status as a leader in education.

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