

Water

We all have an evolutionary bond with water and whether we consciously acknowledge it or not we nurture a natural affinity for it. It would be easy enough to note that our bodies, like the rest of the Earth, are three fourths water and that simply explains it but that is only part of the story. In our lives, when we seek tranquillity and peace it is to the beach, lake or mountain stream that we retreat. This is a subconscious desire to reunite with the serenity and safety of our most recent water embrace, the womb, as well as a much more ancient compulsion to revisit the primordial site of all of our existence, the sea.

Once you understand that we are creatures of water it is easy to understand why no garden can be complete nor maximize its restful rejuvenating powers unless water, in some form, is an integral part of it. Whether that feature is a cascading waterfall, trickling stream or placid pool makes no difference to the inner soul of longing we all have. We attune to our origins, the Earth and nature as a whole when we once again interface with life's most precious liquid.

For centuries the Eastern cultures have known of this relationship. It is well understood that no oriental garden is complete without water, represented in these cultures by a circle. The origin of the Zen "dry" or "So" garden was necessitated by the unfortunate lack of physical water at these sites. The 'presence' of water was achieved by raking fine gravel into wave patterns to create the illusion of water. It is no mistake that the circle also represents mankind as a whole and that the two should share the same sign.

All Japanese gardens will always have three definable shapes present, the triangle, representing heaven; the rectangle, representing Mother Earth; and the circle, representing the duo of man and water safely between the two. The only exception to this rule is found in the famous So garden at the Ryoanji Temple in Kyoto, Japan and duplicated here at Foxfire. No evidence of a circle can be determined until one realizes that this garden is not complete until a human being is present. The person then supplies the completing circle to bring this astounding man made construction into harmony with the natural universe. This strongly unique symbolism stresses the interlocking involvement that exists between man and our ultimate origin--water.