

# **Conservation of Japanese Gardens in Gifu Prefecture**

Landscape Gardening and Greening Course

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## **1. Introduction**

I chose the conservation status of Japanese gardens in Gifu Prefecture as a theme for two reasons: first, because I was very interested in Japanese gardens and wanted to write a paper on the subject; and second, I became interested in the management of temple and shrine gardens after having done two internships in Kyoto and managing gardens of temples and shrines several times during my two years at the International Academy of Horticulture. This led me to investigate into the conservation of Japanese gardens in Gifu Prefecture, where the school is located.

## **2. Japanese Gardens in Gifu Prefecture**

I collected information on the number of Japanese gardens in Gifu Prefecture from books and the Internet. Specifically, I created a list of Japanese gardens in Gifu Prefecture by referring to the “History of Landscaping in Gifu Prefecture”<sup>1)</sup> and garden information media “Oniwa-san” (oniwa.garden).<sup>2)</sup>

As a result, I was able to list 67 gardens. The list revealed that most gardens were created from the middle to the end of the Edo period, and that most of them were in the Chuno region.

## **3. History of Japanese Gardens in the Neighborhood**

I selected ten gardens for their historical value near Kani City, where the school is located. I researched these gardens, their history, and the history of the buildings. As a result, some gardens were found to have been altered in shape by natural disasters, and others were relocated.

## **4. Conservation of Japanese Gardens and Field Survey Methods of Investigation**

In researching the conservation of Japanese gardens, I focused on the following three points with reference to Mr. Kato Tomoki's paper.<sup>3)</sup>

### **(1) History and Caretaker**

When researching a garden, it is necessary to find out the history of the garden and its caretakers. Along with history, the landscape of the surrounding environment of the garden changes, and as a result, the height and species of the trees planted within the garden change over time. It is necessary to investigate how successive caretakers have responded to these changes.

### **(2) Past and Present Landscapes**

The past and present landscapes will be compared using old photographs. This will

allow us to examine how the surrounding landscape, plantings, and masonry have changed.

### (3) Comparative Findings Between Old Photographs and Those of Current Conditions

When comparing the old photographs with the present conditions, the garden paths, stones, views outside the garden, and trees are particularly comparable.

## 5. Field Survey

Of the 10 gardens surveyed in the literature review, we conducted a field survey at Gukei-ji Temple, which is located near the school and kindly accepted my field survey.

Gukei-ji Temple (2635-1, Naka, Mitake-cho, Kani-gun, Gifu Prefecture) was built in 1396 on the mountainside of the present Gukei-ji Temple (former Gukei-ji Temple) and was later moved to its present location (1830-1844). It is known for its karesansui (dry landscape garden) and has gardens such as the 33 Reichi (sacred place) gardens.

The survey was conducted to find out the management of the garden and the changes of the garden from the past to the present.

### (1) Management

The Gukei-ji Temple Garden is well managed. Looking at the entire garden, there are many azaleas, and many red pines and hiba (cypress) are also planted. Daily maintenance includes cleaning, trimming, and pruning of azaleas and other shrubs by the head priest. However, the temple asks contractors and parishioners to take care of the pruning of tall trees, especially red pines, as well as when there are temple events such as Obon and New Year's festivals.

### (2) Changes in the Gardens from the Past to the Present

Past documents and photographs revealed that the garden has changed. Interviews were also conducted with the head priest.

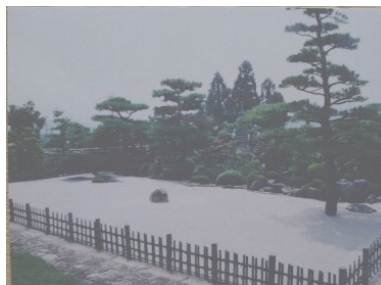


Photo-1-3: Gukei-ji Temple Garden (from left to right: Taken before 1955,<sup>4)</sup> from 1991 to 1994,<sup>5)</sup> and in 2023)

Comparing photos 1 to 3, you can see that although the placement of the stones has not changed, the plantings next to the stones have changed significantly. Looking at Photo 1, you can see that the stones on the far right are planted with red pine and Japanese gardenia, the stones in the center are planted with maples and miscellaneous trees, and although they cannot be seen in the photo, according to the chief priest, junipers are planted on the stone on the far left. However, Photo-2 shows that the Japanese gardenia on the far-right stone and the planting on the center stone are missing. And, looking at

Photo-3, the red pine tree on the far right is also gone. The junipers on the far left are still there, and azaleas have been added.

## **6. Summary**

After conducting the field survey, we learned that prior research is very important when conducting said field surveys. By knowing this in advance, I was able to ask questions from various viewpoints, which made it easier to write my thesis. The changes in the garden from the past to the present could be analyzed clearly by using old photographs. It was unfortunate that the trees were gone, but the garden was managed by keeping its current state rather than adding all the plants.

## **References**

- 1) Tagami, Kazuo (1980): Gifu Prefecture Landscaping History, Gifu Prefecture Landscape Gardening and Greening Association
- 2) Garden Information Media [Oniwasan] <https://oniwa.garden/>
- 3) Kato Tomoki, Shimizu Kazuki, Sakaue Tomio (2017): A Study of Murin-an's Past Scenery from Old Photographs Property of General Yamagata Memorial Museum, Journal of The Japanese Institute of Landscape Architecture, Vol. 80, No. 5, p.447-452
- 4) Okumura Chisaku (1959): History of the Old Zen temple, Dachisan Gukei-ji Temple
- 5) Courtesy of the Chief Priest of Gukei-ji Temple