

Remarks by H.E. Mr. HAYASHI Hajime,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
at the Japanese Garden Society National Conference 2024
on 13th April 2024

Honorary President McEnally,
National Conference Chairman Bowyer,
Distinguished Guests,

I am truly grateful for this opportunity to join the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Japanese Garden Society at this National Conference 2024. It is delightful to see that so many people in the UK and Japan are learning from and engaging with each other while developing such deep relationships through gardens.

It is not at all secret that what exactly constitutes a Japanese garden has been a topic of difficult debate for a long time. Although there may be different views on the subject, it is generally thought that Japanese gardens have a distinctive style based on Zen philosophy, spirituality, and unique landscaping techniques such as *karesansui*, or dry landscapes, and borrowed landscapes as well as “spaces” between objects that inspire imagination and calmness.

The UK’s acquaintance with Japanese gardens goes back more than 100 years from now, starting from the cultural display at the Japan-British Exhibition in 1910 and Tatton Park in 1913. More recently, the Japanese Garden Society was established in 1993, some 30 years ago, and has diligently contributed to the complex task of building, maintaining and enhancing the understanding of Japanese gardens in the UK.

The Society has continuously cooperated with the Japanese Embassy in the UK. The former Chairman Mr Robert Ketchell, one of the founders of the Society, was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette

in 2018 for his contribution to Japanese-British relations through Japanese gardens. I remember vividly the opening ceremony for the Japanese Peace Garden in Coventry in July 2021, whose landscaping was beautifully handled by the Society. Volunteers, including schoolchildren, and Japanese companies also participated in the creation of that wonderful Japanese garden. I was very impressed by how it truly symbolised world peace and Anglo-Japanese friendship. I hope that the Society will continue to have a substantial, positive impact on the promotion of mutual understanding between our two countries.

Exchanges between the UK and Japan through gardens are not limited to one direction. British gardens and gardening are also becoming more and more popular in Japan, which boasts many examples of them. Following a visit by His Royal Highness Prince William, Prince of Wales, in 2015, a British garden was built in Motomiya City, Fukushima Prefecture, as a sign of friendship and reconstruction in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake. It features an English-style rose garden and rose arch as well as a variety of flowers. Meanwhile, as you know, the Fukushima Garden in Holland Park, London, was opened in 2012 in cooperation with the Fukushima Prefectural Association in the UK, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and many gardeners from both countries to deepen ties and express gratitude for all the UK's support following the Great East Japan Earthquake.

In all these ways and more, gardens have deepened the bonds between the UK and Japan and have become a symbol of Japan-UK friendship. We hope that Japanese gardens in the UK will continue to be places of peace and relaxation for people and bridges of friendship between our two countries. I would once again like to offer my congratulations to the Japanese Garden Society on their 30th anniversary at this National Conference 2024.

Thank you very much.