

THE JAPANESE FRIENDSHIP GARDEN SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

The Japanese Friendship Garden in San Diego, California, got its start in a different location at Balboa Park as a tea house for the 1915 Panama California Exposition. Starting several years ago, the garden embarked on a major expansion to increase its size to more than eleven acres by clearing the ravine behind the present garden. Since then, a waterfall and stream have been installed. "Pink Cloud" and other cherry trees planted in a new grove bloom annually for a festival begun nine years ago. A new koi pond and pavilion are under construction. Major contributions have been raised and most of the work will be done in time to celebrate the centennial of Balboa Park next year.



BALBOA PARK CENTENNIAL SPURS COMPLETION OF SAN DIEGO'S JAPANESE FRIENDSHIP GARDEN

BY **MARISA TAKEUCHI**

2015 marks one hundred years since the formation of Balboa Park for the 1915 Panama-California Exposition. The Japanese Friendship Garden Society of San Diego, in its third and final phase of a nine-acre expansion, will complete this undertaking by January 2015 as a gift to the City of San Diego for the Centennial Celebration of Balboa Park. The expansion began in early 2010 with creation of the dry waterfall, a connecting water feature, the dragon bridge, cherry tree grove, camellia and azalea garden, nursery, and a tea and herb garden. Visitors will follow a strolling path across bridges and through various arrangements of rocks, hedges and trees. Traditional

Visitors enjoy a tranquil and beautifully framed view of the dry garden from inside the Pavilion at San Diego's Japanese Friendship Garden
Photo courtesy of Japanese Friendship Garden of San Diego.

features such as stone lanterns and bamboo fences will enhance the design.

With the support of our members, along with a \$3 million personal commitment from long-time patron, Dr. Kazuo Inamori, the garden, which was originally two and a half acres, will be adding nine acres and a new 3,400 square foot pavilion surrounded by another exquisite pond and connecting dry rock streams. Dr. Inamori serves as chairman emeritus of Kyocera Corporation, which he founded in 1959, and chairman emeritus of Japan Airlines. As of January 2014, the project has raised approximately \$6.8 million of the \$13 million goal and approximately 65% of the garden phase of the expansion has been completed. Once finished, the Japanese Friendship Garden will be among the larger public Japanese gardens in North America.

In addition to the completed expansion, the Japanese Friendship Garden will offer featured exhibitions including a year-long exhibit highlighting the history of

Japanese and Japanese American entities in the Park including the 1915 Tea Pavilion, House of Japan, San Diego Yokohama Sister City Society, and the Japanese Friendship Garden. The exhibition will coincide with a documentary featuring the oral histories of key members in the community. In addition, there will be art exhibitions introducing artists from Japan in the fields of porcelain and basketry.

The completion of the new Pavilion will allow the garden to expand on its cultural events, programming and community partnerships, such as the annual Cherry Blossom Festival and the Summer Camp program for students in grades Kindergarten through 8th. The garden will host an Obon Festival in August in partnership with the Buddhist Temple of San Diego. It will bring to the Garden traditional folk dancing, floating of lanterns, traditional street foods, and cultural entertainment.

During the centennial year 2015, the garden estimates that visitor attendance will double from the present



The expansion of the Japanese Friendship Garden of San Diego reaches into a gully below the former one and a half acre garden. At completion the garden expands to eleven acres in size and contains a new education pavilion and koi pond, ceremonial tea house, and azalea hillside in addition to the cherry tree orchard
Photo courtesy Japanese Friendship Garden of San Diego



100,000 annual visitors. Since the opening of the first portion of the expansion project in August 2013, the Japanese Friendship Garden's membership pool has grown by roughly 45%, from about 600 members to more than 1,000. While average membership growth nationally is a mere 2.7% (2011-2012) according to the American Alliance of Museums, the Japanese Friendship Garden is experiencing an exciting period of growth with membership at its highest point. We expect to see numbers continue to climb in anticipation of the completion of the pavilion and remainder of the garden expansion.

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The 1915-16 Panama-California Exposition commemorated the opening of the Panama Canal, which formally opened August 15, 1914, and provided a major impetus for the creation of Balboa Park as it appears today. The present Japanese Friendship Garden has its roots in Japanese tea house at this fair, which strengthened cultural and commercial ties linking the United States and Japan. Photo courtesy San Diego, C.P. Expo 1914, image #5431, used with permission of Japanese Friendship Garden of San Diego