

# CREATING BEAUTY BEHIND BARBED WIRE

# MANZANAR'S JAPANESE GARDENS



ABOVE: Retake of Ansel Adams' 1943 photograph of Mt. Williamson from Manzanar showing abundant boulders on the Sierran bajada *Photo by Jeff Burton* OPPOSITE PAGE: Manzanar Relocation Center *Photo courtesy of Manzanar NHS*

BY JEFF BURTON & MARY FARRELL

## BEST GARDEN TO BE CHOSEN

*Six months ago Manzanar was a barren, uninhabited desert. Today, beautiful green lawns, picturesque gardens with miniature mountains, stone lanterns, bridges over ponds where carp play, and other original, decorative ideas attest to the Japanese people's traditional love of nature, and ingenuity in reproducing the beauty of nature in miniature. We hope that through this contest we can publicize the gardens of Manzanar to the residents and to the outside public.<sup>1</sup>*

*- Manzanar Free Press, October 8, 1942.*

A desolate prison camp in the high desert seems an unlikely place for a Japanese garden contest, let alone an outstanding collection of Japanese gardens. World War II would seem an unlikely time for Japanese Americans to assert their Japanese heritage. Yet the Japanese Americans incarcerated at the Manzanar Relocation Center, now Manzanar National Historic Site, left a legacy of beauty, resistance, and resilience in Japanese gardens.

The incarceration of almost 120,000 Japanese Americans – most American citizens – by the U.S. government during World War II is one of the more shameful stories in American history. The “Relocation” removed persons of Japanese ancestry from their homes, schools, and businesses on the West Coast and placed primarily behind barbed wire. Manzanar opened in March 1942 – one of ten camps – to incarcerate more than 10,000 people.

Although this episode managed to stay out of U.S. history books for decades, it has come to light through the efforts of the Japanese American community, civil rights advocates, historians, and archaeologists.<sup>2</sup>

Three of these sites are now part of the National Park Service, which is charged with educating the public to prevent similar government-sponsored racism. Much of the interpretation surrounding internment focuses on hardship: crowded conditions, absence of privacy, forfeited possessions, and the overarching loss of freedom.

1. “Best Garden to be Chosen,” *Manzanar Free Press*, October 8, 1942.

2. Mary Farrell. “Archaeology of the Japanese American incarceration,” *Densho Online Encyclopedia* <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Archaeology%20of%20the%20Japanese%20American%20incarceration/> (accessed Feb 1 2014).



Oral histories, contemporary newspapers, and archaeological investigations, however, reveal a different aspect of the internment: a resurgence of Japanese cultural traditions, including martial arts, calligraphy, flower-arranging, language, and Japanese gardens. Already imprisoned for their ethnicity, internees may have figured they had nothing to lose by embracing their heritage. In addition, for many it was the first time in their adult lives that they had significant free time.

Diverse evidence suggests that all of the relocation centers had gardens.<sup>3</sup> Manzanar's Japanese gardens, however, are unique for their number, size, and complexity. Three factors contributed to this abundance: the availability of rocks from the nearby Sierra Nevada; the availability of water for ponds

and streams; and the high number of professional gardeners, landscapers, and nursery owners incarcerated there. In addition, Manzanar retains a relatively good state of preservation: the gardens were buried but there was not any development.<sup>4</sup>

Like other relocation centers, Manzanar was in a remote, sparsely populated area. The Owens Valley, in eastern California, is very dry, with cold winters and hot summers. For construction, an area about a mile square was first bulldozed. More than 850 buildings were hastily constructed to serve as barracks, mess halls, latrines, and administrative facilities, all surrounded by barbed wire and guard towers.

The War Relocation Authority (WRA) initiated some measures to improve living conditions.

3. Jeffery Burton, Mary Farrell, Florence Lord, and Richard Lord, *Confinement and Ethnicity: An Overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002); Jeffery Burton, Laura Bergstresser, and Anna Tamura, *Archeology at the Gate: Archeological Investigations at the Entrance of the Minidoka Relocation Center, Minidoka Internment National Monument* (Tucson, Arizona: National Park Service, Western Archeological and Conservation Center, Tucson, 2003); Bonnie Clark, "The Archaeology of Gardening at Amache: A Synthesis of results from University of Denver Field Investigations, Summer 2008." *University of Denver, Department of Anthropology*; Bonnie Clark,

2011, "The Archaeology of Gardening at Amache, Summary Report, Summer 2010." *Dumbarton Oaks, Research Library and Collection, Washington, DC*; Allen Eaton, *Beauty Behind Barbed Wire* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952). Anna H. Tamura, "Gardens below the Watchtower: Gardens and Meaning in World War II Japanese American Incarceration Camps," *Landscape Journal* 23, no. 1(2004):1-21.

4. Jeffery Burton, "Three Farewells to Manzanar: The Archeology of Manzanar National Historic Site." *Western Archeological and Conservation Center Publications in Anthropology* 67. Tucson, Arizona: National Park Service, 1996.

However, the main efforts to make Manzanar livable came from the internees. One of the most important improvements was the creation of hundreds of gardens, ranging in size from a few square feet to five acres, and in design from simple rock outlines to elaborate landscapes.

After Manzanar closed in 1945, many of the gardens disappeared. Buildings were removed or demolished, and debris was burned, buried, and pushed into ponds. Sand and silts covered much of the site, and vegetation obscured other traces of the 10,000 persons once confined here. Recent archaeological excavations – guided by historical photographs, archival documents, and oral histories – have begun to uncover family barracks gardens, neighborhood mess hall gardens, and larger community gardens.

## FOR THE FAMILY

The earliest and most common gardens were small and personal, decorating the exterior of living spaces. Sometimes these were located just in front of the garden-maker's apartment, but William Katsuki's garden in Block 24 stretched the length of his barracks. Started April 19, 1942, Katsuki's was the first reported landscape garden at Manzanar. The narrow garden featured a small stream channel edged with rocks collected by hand, or with a borrowed wheelbarrow or truck, from inside the Relocation Center.<sup>5</sup> The stream meandered along the west side of Barracks 5 from the water spigot at one end of the building with small pools formed along the way.

Historical photographs show the garden with rocks, Joshua trees, cactus, and miniature wooden bridges. There are also decorative logs or stumps, dead brush and branches, and a short section of rangui (wood posts set vertically) along the water course. One shows a simple gateway with "idle hermitage" written in Japanese and a sign next to the door in English that names "Wm. Katsuki, D. Takamatsu, and Fred Hayashi," three widowers, as the occupants. The photographs reveal the watercourse as unlined, with no cement.

5. "Landscape Designs Unique Desert Garden," *Manzanar Free Press*, June 30, 1942.

A personal garden in Block 15 by Yasai Nakata, a professional gardener from Pasadena, won third prize in the garden contest run by the Manzanar Free Press in the fall of 1942. Archaeological excavation in 2010 revealed a large concrete pond with scalloped edges and an island. The pond was centered between Barracks 5 and 6, and large enough that four apartment doors faced it.

Another small personal garden in Block 15 was built at Barracks 7. Appearing in historical photographs and in a few seconds of a color home movie, it was mentioned on August 12, 1942 in the *Manzanar Free Press*: "Fish Ponds Appear. One of the most beautiful fish ponds in the center is found at Block 15 recreation hall. The pond is kidney shaped with a miniature bridge at the narrowest points. Roy Sugiwaru, gardener; and Keichiro Muto, flower grower, designed and constructed the pond. The public works division, however, discourages the building of more ponds because of cement shortage."<sup>6</sup> Historical photos indicate that the garden had two rustic Japanese stone lanterns (ishidoro) and a concrete bridge. Archaeological investigations revealed the pond's location, decorative rock borders, and parts of stone lanterns within the pond depression. Stepping stones of recycled concrete slab fragments surrounded the pond and also created a path to the Muto family's door. The bridge, too, was formed of concrete fragments held in place with fresh concrete. Inscribed in the concrete bridge are characters that may read "Made by Muto." The stone lanterns were reassembled and the bridge, pond edge, and other features have been repaired.

Differences in construction of these gardens suggest that the builders had different access to materials, which may reflect the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the internees and perhaps unofficial requisition processes. Katsuki, a noted landscaper from southern California, was landscaping the WRA administration area, and thus was allowed to leave the camp to collect materials like Joshua trees and cactus for that space and his own garden.

In contrast, the Block 15 garden builders were limited to what they could scrounge in camp. Limited

6. "Fish Ponds Appear," *Manzanar Free Press*, August 12, 1942.





William Katsuki, professional landscape gardener for large estates in Southern California, demonstrates his skill and ingenuity in creating from materials close at hand a desert garden alongside his home in the barracks at this War Relocation Authority center *Photo by Dorothea Lange, Manzanar, California. 6/30/42, volume 23, section C, WRA no. C-865, Contributing institution: University of California Berkeley Bancroft Library*

amounts of cement were made available for block projects, and only small rocks occur naturally within the Relocation Center. Muto and Sugiwaru used many small rocks to supplement their cement. In contrast, Nakata's garden contains very few rocks and a large amount of cement, perhaps because one of Nakata's neighbors worked at the cement warehouse. Later family gardens were built with more and larger rocks, after the WRA reduced the restrictions on leaving the camp for day trips.

## FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Three times a day, internees stood in line for meals at their block's mess hall. Gardens were constructed at many of the 36 mess halls to give block residents something pleasant to look at while they waited. The first mess hall garden, in Block 22, was conceived by kitchen worker Harry Ueno and finished early in August 1942. It was designed by Akira Nishi, a landscape gardener, and George Saburo Takemura made a wishing-well fountain for the pond. They named it *otaba no ike*, derived from the source of pure and sacred water that flows to Kiyomizu temple in Kyoto. According to the Manzanar Free Press, the Block 22 mess hall garden placed second in the Manzanar Best Garden Contest.<sup>7</sup>

7. "Garden Contest Won by B-34," *Manzanar Free Press*, November 5, 1942.

The garden was cleared and mapped by archaeologists in 1993. The concrete-lined pond is in a figure eight shape with a concrete bridge at its narrowest point and an island in the south portion. A low mound of earth and rocks forms a waterfall at the north end. A short sidewalk leads from the former mess hall location to the bridge. Most interestingly, salvaged and "found" items were incorporated: a steering linkage from an automobile still sits in the ground to support a fence, and historical photographs show an old wagon wheel.

Before the Block 22 mess hall garden was finished, landscape designer Ryozo Kado began a mess hall garden in Block 6.<sup>8</sup> The Manzanar Free Press elaborates:

## UNIQUE TROUT'S SHANGRI-LA BEING COMPLETED

A home for a turtle, 100 trout and approximately 60 carp is the dream come true pond and garden now being completed between the kitchen and building 14 of Block 6. Under the supervision of R.F. Kado, the kitchen crew is putting in the finishing touches. The trees and plants donated by Messrs. Miyoji Uyematsu, Munejiro Matsuyama and Moichiro Tachibana include

8. *Block Manager's Daily Report, Block 6, August 5, 1942.*

pine, cedar and camellia, while a waterfall, trickling out of sun-browned rocks, lends an air of distinction to the scenery. The carp, measuring 16 inches in length, brighten the water with their red color and can be easily distinguished from the other fishes. For the coming winter a pond that can be frozen has been started where water occupants may swim in icy contentment. This coming Saturday, Oct. 3, an open house will be held for block residents with "Mochi tsuki," being the main event. Mr. Harry Oshio is responsible for this rare Japanese treat.<sup>9</sup>

Historical photographs of this currently unexcavated garden show a small stream and a large pond, two rocky islands, a wood fence, small pine trees, and many rocks. The south and west areas are mostly grass with rocks; the east and north parts are rocky mounds with trees and shrubs, but no grass. A rock and concrete walkway ran alongside the mess hall.

Ryozo Kado created another mess hall garden, in Block 9, which was archaeologically excavated and stabilized in 2007. It includes extensive rock work, a watercourse, waterfalls, two connected ponds, and concrete faux-wood logs. Stabilization work included re-fitting displaced boulders, restoration of an earthen mound, and repair of one faux-wood log. In an unpublished memoir, Kado explained why he was motivated to help the fishermen who lived in Block 9: "The bitterest group were some fishermen evacuated on 24 hours notice from their homes on Terminal Island in Los Angeles harbor. I was anxious to do something special for these men. Far from the sea, fishermen must suffer more than the rest of us in this heat-stricken desert. To beautify their Block's dining room, I made a fish pond and fountain. This started a rash of requests. Every block wanted a beauty spot. I used free Saturdays and even Sundays to brighten the drab spots..."<sup>10</sup>

Kado also built large gardens in Block 10 and at his own barracks in Block 17. However, in the Manzanar Free Press's garden contest, the first-place winner

was the mess hall garden in Block 34, started on September 23, 1942, under the supervision of George Kubota, Seiichi Kayahara, and George Murakomi.<sup>11</sup> The elaborate garden includes a rocky mound, concrete-lined pond, stream, bridge, rock arrangements, and a barbed-wire fence. The rocks are red- and purple-hued metavolcanic stone, possibly from the Alabama Hills. The garden, seen in historical photographs and a home movie, was named San-shi-en, or "3-4 Garden," for the block number; not coincidentally the name could also be interpreted as "purple mountain," which describes the hill created at its northern end.

Excavation in 1999 revealed a large pond, bifurcated stream, and a little rock bridge. Crane and tortoise stones rise from the pond, but one of the two "wings" is broken. In 2006, the garden was stabilized, the mounds restored, and the wood and wire fence rebuilt. All the mess hall gardens uncovered so far, with one exception, follow the so-called Hill-and-Pond style (tsukiyama-niwa), with a waterfall originating at the north end feeding a stream and pond. The one exception is at Block 22, where a rustic wishing well overflowed almost directly into the pond. As far as is known, all the mess hall gardens were fenced, indicating that they were primarily designed to be viewed like paintings rather than entered. Likely the gardens were intended to be viewed from the south, where internees waited in line for meals.

The mess hall gardens were favorite backdrops for photographs, hinting at the pride block residents must have felt. That pride likely spurred informal competition as well as the Manzanar Free Press "Best Garden" contest. In fact, some gardens were improved: changes can be seen in historical photographs; block managers often reported continued work; and archaeological evidence indicates that the second stream was added to the Block 34 garden after initial construction.

## FOR THE COMMUNITY

The incarcerated Japanese Americans built facilities to serve the entire community, including a high school

*paper on file at Manzanar NHS.*

<sup>11</sup>. *Block Manager's Daily Report, Block 34, November 23, 1942.*

<sup>9</sup>. "Unique Trout's Shangri-La Being Completed," *Manzanar Free Press*, September 28, 1942.

<sup>10</sup>. *Ryozo Kado Memoir, Maryknoll Mission Archive, p. 16. Unpublished*

auditorium, picnic areas, festival grounds, a Judo dojo, and sports fields. Three of these community developments were Japanese gardens: Cherry Park, the Hospital Gardens, and Merritt Park.

Cherry Park was located near the Children's Village, the only orphanage at the ten relocation centers. Sparked by an interned nursery owner's donation, construction of Cherry Park began by January 1943. Donor F. M. Uyematsu was given special permission to retrieve 1,000 cherry trees and wisteria from his pre-war business, Star Nurseries, in Montebello, California. The Manzanar Free Press reported:

"Roughly the plan calls for a small park with three ponds, each on a different level, with flowing water. The project is under Land Improvement and supervised by [William] Katsuki, a well-known landscaper."<sup>12</sup>

Uyematsu supervised the planting and care of the cherry trees, and of the wisteria placed on three arbors over a constructed stream. None of the photographs show rocks, and in only one is water visible. Other photographs show the stream course and pond as dry. According to the WRA's Manzanar final report,<sup>13</sup> there was not enough water to keep the pond full so it was seeded with grass. All that remains of Cherry Park today are the depressions from the earthen ponds and some low mounds.

Two Japanese gardens were created at the hospital, one located in front of the patient wards and one east of the doctors' quarters. For patients, staff, and visitors, the hospital gardens served as a refuge. Vegetation and a pond provided comfort to the senses and its Japanese styling imparted cultural familiarity and an expression of pride. These gardens may have been started as early as July 1942 because the Manzanar Free Press for July 31 reported that Kado was at work in the hospital area. It seems likely, however, that the gardens were not completed until June 2, 1943, when the Manzanar Free Press reported: "Landscaping Work Beautifies Hospital. ... The rocks were laid and flagstones were constructed under the direction of Ryozo Kado and Buneyoman Wada of the Public



Stone walls and faux wood concrete bench at the hospital  
*Photo by Ansel Adams, courtesy of Library of Congress*

Works department in cooperation with Nintaro Ogami, foreman of the hospital ground crew."<sup>14</sup>

Not all garden work and workers were identified in the camp newspaper or Block Manager Reports. For example, in an oral history Sus Ioki indicates that his father, Toyoshige Ioki, designed the hospital garden, and helped to build Merritt Park. Historical photographs corroborate his father's participation. Born in Japan in 1888, Toyoshige Ioki was operating a nursery in Venice, California, at the start of the war. At his own barracks, he created a small, elegant flower garden bordered by rocks.

The hospital gardens appear in many historical photographs. In front of the wards there were a rock retaining wall and steps, a faux-wood concrete bench, and faux-wood concrete tree stumps camouflaging sewer manholes. East of the doctors' quarters were a pond and stream. This garden was cleared and mapped in 1993. Uncovered during the archaeological investigations were the concrete-lined

12. "Beauty Spots," *Manzanar Free Press*, January 13, 1943.

13. Aksol G. Nielsen and Rollin C. Fox, "Community Activity Section Final Sectional Report," October, 1945. *War Relocation Authority, Manzanar Relocation Center, California*.

14. "Landscaping Work Beautifies Hospital," *Manzanar Free Press*, June 2, 1943.





ABOVE: Pool in pleasure park at Manzanar Relocation Center  
OPPOSITE PAGE: Mrs. Nakamura and family in park, Manzanar Relocation Center Photos by Ansel Adams courtesy of Library of Congress

pond and stream course, boulder stepping stones, two winding concrete walkways, wood-reinforced pathway steps, and rock borders. The pond was of a gourd shaped with a flat bottom. Intricate rock work created hiding places for fish and increased the visual interest. Impressions in the concrete indicate that the banks were lined with rangui walls.

Located in the firebreak between Blocks 33 and 34 and constructed as a Japanese-style stroll garden, Merritt Park became a sanctuary of beauty and nature at Manzanar. It was started in fall 1942 as a Western-style "Rose Garden" by Kuichiro Nishi, who with his brother Akira ran the Nishi family nursery, flower shop, and farms specializing in roses before the war.<sup>15</sup> Kuichiro Nishi worked with Takio Muto to design improvements to the rose garden, with several other gardeners contributing their expertise. The group was allowed to collect rocks and plants outside the camp, giving them access to stones with distinct colors, shapes, and textures. Eventually, the garden was expanded to include many species of flowers and trees, as well as two large ponds, an island, and a waterfall.

Atop the waterfall an immense boulder, said to resemble a turtle, was placed so that the water flowed over its back and its head divided the stream into two cascades. Two more rock turtles, one with a "head" cemented onto the "body," were located within the upper pond. One of the ponds was reportedly situated over a natural spring covered when the relocation center was constructed.<sup>16</sup> The ponds must

15. Yukiko McCarty, "Gardens of Flowers Bloomed in an Internment Camp, Manzanar National Historic Site (Former Manzanar War Relocation Center)," *The East* 41, No. 6 (2006): 23-28.

16. "Lakes, Island, Tearoom To Beautify Largest Pond," *Manzanar Free Press*, November 28, 1942.

17. "Parents Given Warning," *Manzanar Free Press*, July 11, 1945.





have been stocked with fish as the Manzanar Free Press requested that children stop fishing at Merritt Park, because there were “hardly any fish left.”<sup>17</sup>

Kuichiro Nishi created Merritt Park’s iconic rustic bridge out of natural tree branches. A rustic, open-sided pavilion at the edge of the lower pond was also formed of natural materials.

With the addition of the Japanese garden, the Rose Garden was renamed Pleasure Park and later Merritt Park in honor of the camp director. Two large vertically set stones were installed as memorial stele. One was inscribed with Japanese characters that can be read as “Merritt Park.” The characters on the other stele mean “memorial stone” and “October 1943.” Both also have, in English, “Pleasure Park” and “1943.”

Numerous historical photographs reflect this community park’s importance. Internees and camp staff alike went there to enjoy solitude as well as companionship. In the book *Farewell to Manzanar*,

Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston remembered Merritt Park as a place of solace within the camp confines. She wrote, “You could face away from the barracks, look past a tiny rapids toward the darkening mountains, and for a while not be a prisoner at all. You could hang suspended in some odd, almost lovely land you could not escape from yet almost didn’t want to leave.”<sup>18</sup>

Merritt Park served as backdrop for hundreds of home movies and photographs, including a famous photograph by Ansel Adams. The park was even included in an official visitor tour guide developed by the WRA staff. According to letters written in 1946, camp director Ralph Merritt wanted to maintain Merritt Park as part of a tourist resort, but when the camp was abandoned, so was Merritt Park.

## FOR THE FUTURE

*My father’s heart and soul is in the garden he built at Manzanar.*

*- Arthur Ogami 2011*

18. Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston, *Farewell to Manzanar* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), 85.



Today it is tempting to analyze Manzanar's Japanese gardens in terms of traditional stylistic elements. For example, some of the Japanese gardens of Manzanar share many common characteristics with Momoyama style.<sup>19</sup> However, it seems unlikely that the garden builders at Manzanar were consciously implementing formally learned Japanese garden rules. Probably, most builders had never heard of such ancient garden texts as *Sakuteiki*. Some of the characteristics that now seem "typical" of Japanese gardens would not have been evident when the camp was occupied. For example, today the "borrowed scenery" (*shakkei*) of the Sierra forms a spectacular background, but when the gardens were created, the background would have been barracks. The north-south orientation of many of the gardens was dictated not by geomancy but by the orientation of the space between buildings, which was 40 feet east-west and 100 feet north-south.

In fact, most of Manzanar's garden builders did not have formal training in Japanese gardens. The few exceptions include Chotaro Nishimura, who supervised his son Mokutaro Nishimura in the

creation of a rock garden at the Block 4 mess hall.<sup>20</sup> Nishimura had worked at the Crown Prince's gardens in Japan and the Presidential Garden in Mexico City before coming to California. Ryozo Kado did not become a professional gardener until he became Chotaro Nishimura's apprentice. William Katsuki may have had formal training, since he was a professional landscape gardener and created the Japanese garden at Stoner Park in West Los Angeles in 1931. Reportedly, Toyoshige Ioki had spent a month in Japan studying gardens.

In Southern California, many Japanese immigrants and their citizen children became gardeners because anti-Japanese racism and discriminatory laws made it difficult to enter other fields. In gardening they could make use of their experience with plant nurturing and irrigation, without needing large amounts of capital. For example Shoji Naguma, the "father of Southern California gardeners,"<sup>21</sup> had been a teacher in Japan.<sup>22</sup> Most of the gardening work was "maintenance gardening" of Western-style yards.<sup>23</sup> Although there were dozens of Japanese-style

19. National Park Service, *Cultural Landscape Report, Manzanar National Historic Site*, (Oakland, California: Pacific West Regional Office, 2006), 131. See also Will Funk, "The Lost Water Gardens of Manzanar," *Splash* (July/August 2006): 87-97.

20. "Around the Blocks," *Manzanar Free Press*, June 26, 1943.

21. Naomi Hirahara, "Gardens in the Desert: Japanese American Prisoners Create Green Oases within U.S. Concentration Camps," in

Naomi Hirahara, ed., *Greenmakers: Japanese American Gardeners in Southern California* (Los Angeles: Southern California Gardeners' Association, 2000) 52-57.

22. Ronald Taylor Tsukashima, "Politics of Maintenance Gardening and the Formation of the Southern California Gardeners' Association," in *Greenmakers*, 66-93.

23. *Ibid*, 75.



Keichiro Muto and Roy Sugiwaras Block 15 garden then and now Photos courtesy of Eastern California Museum (left) and by Jeff Burton (right)

gardens created by Japanese gardeners in Southern California before World War II, most were built for wealthy Caucasians.<sup>24</sup>

Even those internees familiar with Japanese garden traditions were creating gardens adapted to the challenging camp environment. In a post-war interview, Ryozo Kado explained “Japanese gardens have many rules – all don’t. I start from the opposite viewpoint; do what you want. I try to follow what nature teaches.”<sup>25</sup> Instead of following rigid stylistic principles, many internees may have been inspired by gardens remembered from their youth in Japan, or gardens at tourist sites and world’s fairs. In essence, the internees manifested the fundamental spirit of Japanese gardening by taking inspiration from nature, incorporating materials at hand, and creating beauty for everyday life.

The gardens likely served a variety of purposes: a reminder of a home left decades ago; a break from harsh conditions and to improve morale; and a reduction in the amount and ferocity of dust and sand. The gardens often formed the backdrop for family and group photographs.

In addition, one did not have to be a gardener to build Japanese gardens in camp. Many of the Japanese garden-creators at Manzanar, such as Jack Arai who built a large garden pond in Block 33, were not previously gardeners. At another internment site, Old Raton Ranch in the mountains of New Mexico, it was the interned Japanese American railroad workers who built a Japanese garden featuring a pond and waterfall. To create landscapes with the defining elements of Japanese gardens asserted ethnic identity in the face of discrimination. For the internees, gardens symbolized their hope in the future, as well as their dedication to the well-being of their community.<sup>26</sup>

Japanese gardens were a source of pride during the incarceration, and remain so today: the Japanese

American community identified garden restoration as a priority during public hearings for the Manzanar National Historic Site general management plan. As steward of the gardens, the National Park Service faces ongoing challenges. For example, Tule elk browse freely within the Historic Site, and efforts to reintroduce water and vegetation await construction of an elk-proof fence. Nevertheless, with the help of volunteers, the NPS is striving to uncover and preserve this important history.

Madelon Yamamoto mused about why her father, Jack Arai, had built a pond at Manzanar:

The garden was really a place of beauty and serenity and I think it would remind him a little bit about Japan.... And he wanted something for us to enjoy other than just having the green grass. And it was a project that brought many of his friends together to work on something that was so beautiful and really enjoyed by so many people here in camp. And he took pride in the fact that people would come to look at it and speak to him about it.... And it’s really thrilling to see that he left an accomplishment that can be seen today ... it’s really a tremendous memorial for his respect for the Japanese garden and the heritage that he brought from Japan to Manzanar.<sup>27</sup>

Another perspective was provided by Eddie Noguchi, Associate Producer of *Desert Gardens*, a 2011 Japanese-language documentary about Manzanar’s gardens. “The internees at Manzanar had lost everything and still created beauty for their families and the future. Building Japanese gardens, which focus on harmony and nature, helped people heal.”<sup>28</sup> Perhaps this is the lasting legacy of the Japanese gardens and garden builders of Manzanar.

24. Kendall H. Brown, “Putting Down Roots: Prewar Japanese Gardens and Garden Builders,” in *Greenmakers*, 37-40.

25. Frank J. Taylor, “Wizard of Rocks: How an Architect of Nature Uses Pebbles and Boulders to Transform Bare Ground into Magic Gardens,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, August 5, 1961, pp 16-17 and 36-37.

26. Jeffery Burton, “America’s World War II Internment Camps: Japanese American Patriotism and Defiance at Manzanar,” in James

Symonds, Anna Badcock, and Jeff Oliver, eds., *Historical Archaeologies of Cognition: Explorations into Faith, Hope and Charity* (Sheffield, England: Equinox, 2013) 132-146.

27. Jeffery Burton and Mary Farrell, *A Place of Beauty and Serenity: Excavation and Restoration of the Arai Family Fish Pond, Block 33, Barracks 4 (Manzanar National Historic Site, California)* 65, 73-118.

28. Personal communication 2011.