



# STORRIER STEARNS JAPANESE GARDEN

270 Arlington Rd, Pasadena, CA 91105

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# HISTORY OF THE GARDEN

The Storrier Stearns Garden was designed in the 1930s by Japanese immigrant Kinzuchi Fujii at the Pasadena home for affluent couple: Charles and Ellamae Storrier Stearns. Fujii, an immensely talented person, faced many barriers and discrimination that was unfortunately common for the Orient at that time. When the Storrier Stearns hired him to design and create their garden in 1935, it would become the greatest commission of Fujii's life.

The garden was designed as a stroll garden in the 17th century "*chisen kaiyu shiki*" form, that was commonly seen on the estates of Japan's nobles or Shogun. Like these traditional gardens, the design for Storrier Stearns includes gently winding paths, two ponds with cascading waterfalls, and a series of authentic Japanese bridges. Many of the garden's bronze, granite, and wood artifacts were acquired by the Storrier Stearns during their travels to Japan. The original Niko-an tea house that serves as the focal point for the garden was constructed in Japan, separated, then shipped to Pasadena for reassembly. Construction of the garden took place over five years. Sadly, Fujii was sent to an internment camp for the duration of WWII just prior to the completion of the garden.

Following the death of Charles and Ellamae in the 1940s, the garden was procured and maintained by Gamelia Haddad Poulsen, a well-known gallery owner in Pasadena. In the 1970s part of the property was seized by Caltrans through eminent domain for a freeway project. Discouraged by the fate of the garden, Mrs. Poulsen sold many of the valuable artifacts and lost interest in care for the property. In 1981 a fire destroyed most of the garden including the original teahouse. Fortunately, when the garden was inherited by Mrs. Poulsen's son Jim Haddad and his wife Connie in 1985, they embraced the challenge to restore the garden to its original allure. In 2005, one of the leading experts in The United States on Japanese garden design, Takeo Uesugi generously volunteered to restore the garden.

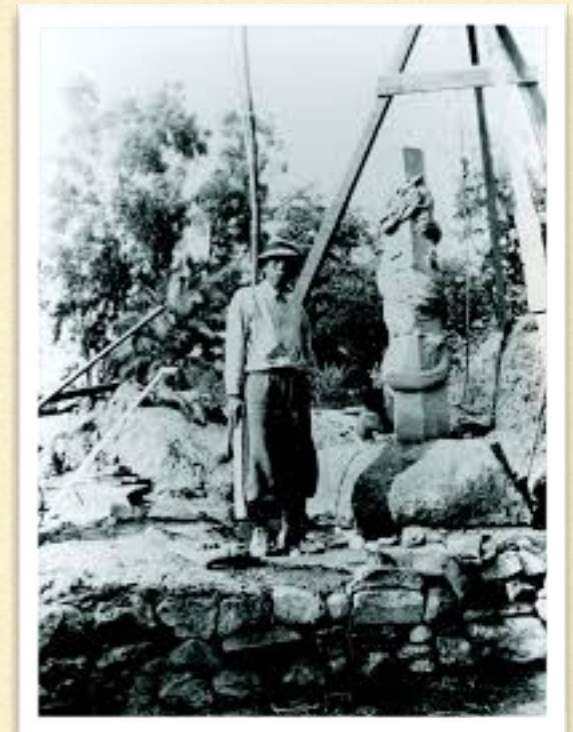
The restoration effort fortunately preserved the original intention of Fujii's design and maintained its meditative aesthetic. Even the tea house was rebuilt after the plans for the original, lost for many years, were recovered from Japan. Modern improvements were made for a water recycling system and better wheelchair accessibility.

Source: <http://www.japanesegardenpasadena.com/history.html>

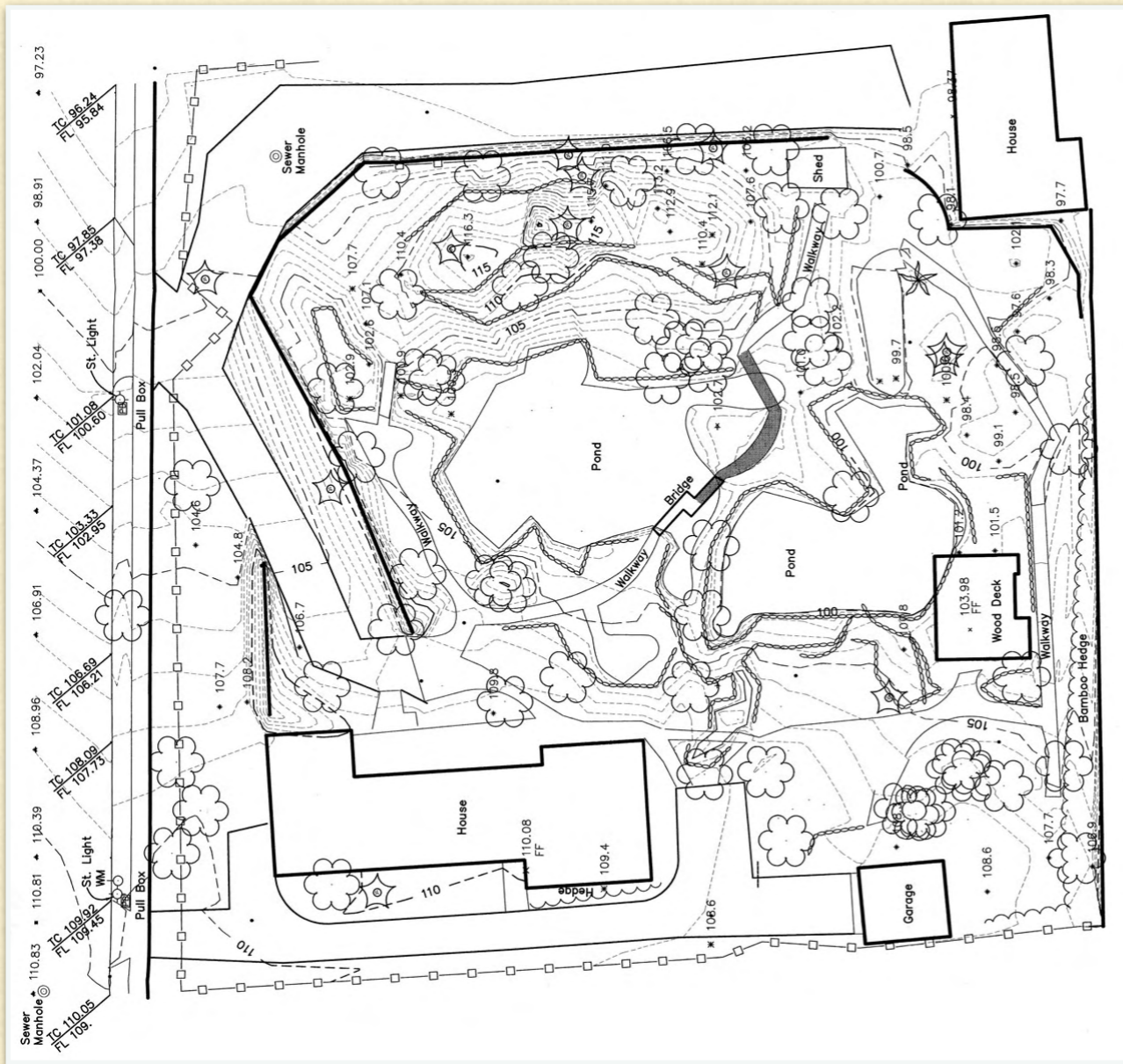
STORRIER STEARNS JAPANESE GARDEN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS - SUMMER 2019



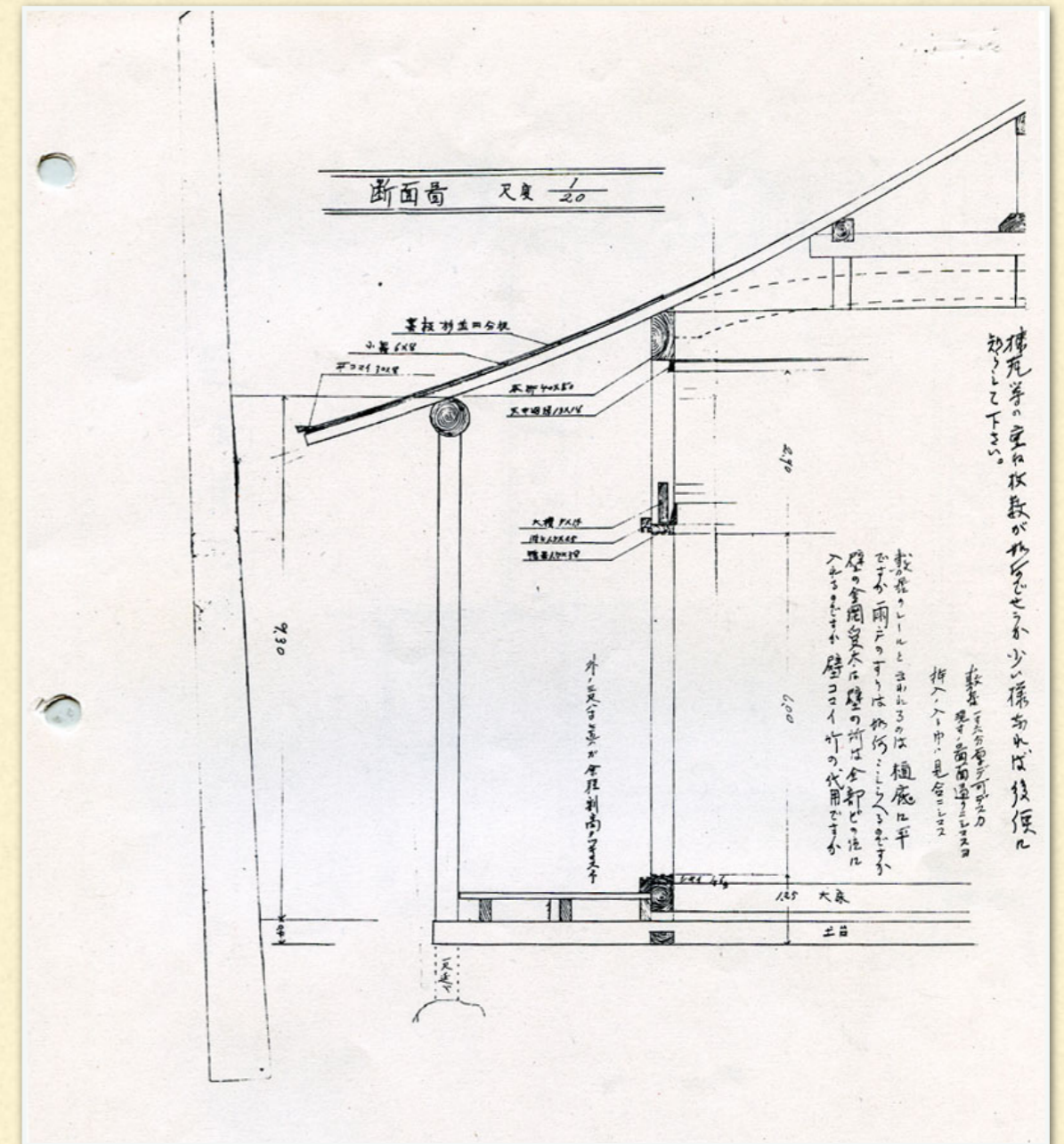
Charles & Ellamae Storrier Stearns



Kinzuchi Fujii



Site Plan for Renovation



Section of Original Tea House

# DESIGN ANALYSIS

As you enter the garden, you can immediately observe the departure from a material world and transcend to a simpler life. You begin at a fork in the path marked by a granite stone lantern with no view of what's beyond. Staying true to the authentic design of a traditional Japanese Tea Garden, the path beckons you towards a covered hut that serves as the waiting bench or in Japanese, *koshikake-machiai*. As you approach the bench the larger of two ponds is revealed. Tea ceremonies are currently reserved for private parties, but guests are still encouraged to absorb the serenity of their surroundings from the waiting bench until they are ready to leave the outside world behind them. The tea house is barely visible from the bench, but the view of the pond and restful sounds of the 12' waterfall invokes a calming relief and sense of solitude.

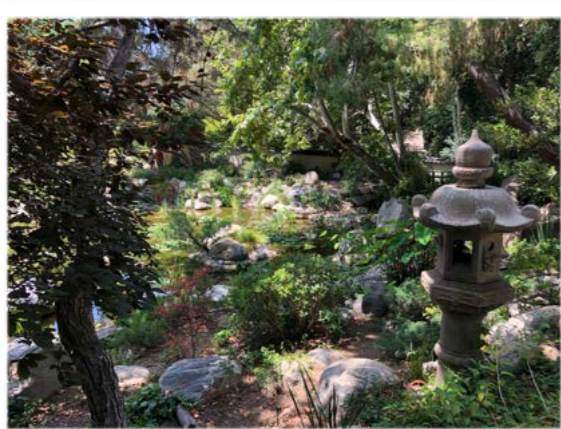
Venturing onward, the path leads you to the top of the waterfall where you meet another granite lantern that draws your attention to the beautiful view on the opposite side of the garden. Like traditional strolling gardens, the path leading from the waiting bench to the tea house or *roji*, is simple and lined with lush green planting. At the bottom of the path, a stone Buddha in meditation marks a second fork that will either take you to the tea house or continue your stroll to a zig zag bridge that is one of the only original artifacts remaining from the original design of the garden. The zig zag bridge is a common feature in many Japanese gardens.



Waiting Bench (koshikake-machiai)



Buddha in Meditation



View from Waterfall



Zigzag Bridge

The purpose of the design is slow your stride and focus your attention on the present moment. According to some ancient legends, evil spirits are unable to make a 90-degree turn and the design prevents the spirits from moving through them. It's also attractive and interesting to walk over as you take notice of the Koi fish swimming in the pond.

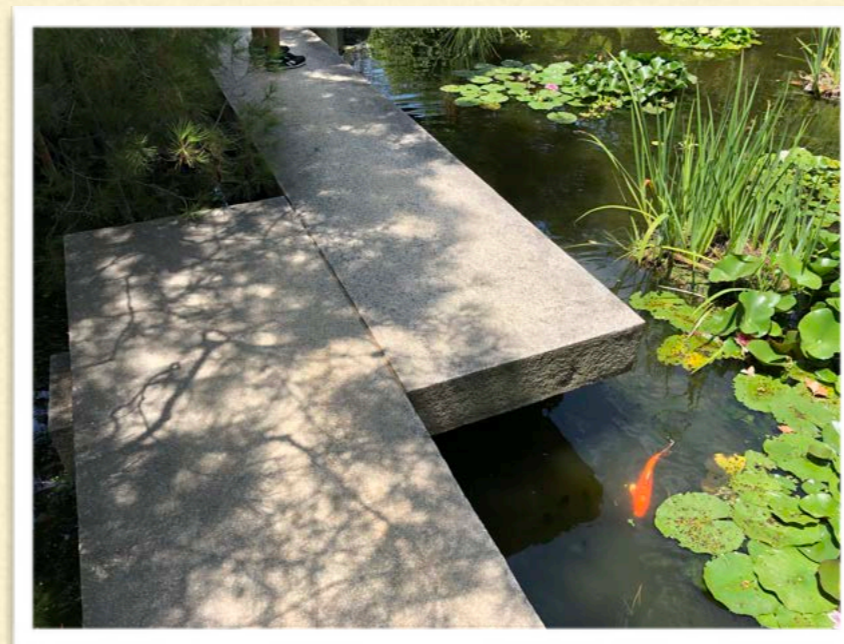
When you choose the other side of the fork towards the tea house, you wind along the path to a moon bridge. This moon bridge has been modified for ADA accessibility during the gardens restoration, but it is generally the original structure. After the bridge, the path opens to the tea house. This view of the tea house from the bridge serves as the best intentional focal point inside the garden. It provides a symmetrical counterbalance to the seemingly natural landscape of the rest of the garden. The house sits on stilts positioned over the rocks of the second pond and framed by a canopy of trees. If you proceed on the path around the tea house, it leads you towards the door to the *mizuya* or small kitchen with an area for shoe storage. You can then walk around the corner of the structure to wash basin (*tsukubai*) before entering the guest entrance to the ceremonial tea room (*cha-shitsu*).



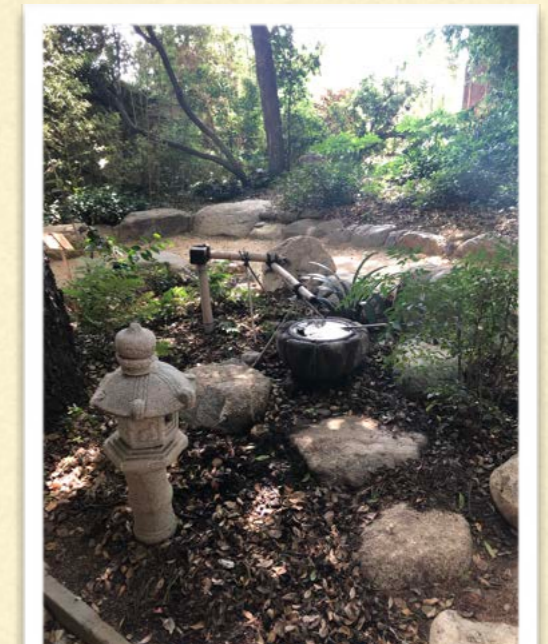
Moon Bridge



View of Tea House from Moon Bridge



Zigzag Bridge & Koi Fish



Water Basin (tsukubai)

The *cha-shitsu* at Storrier Stearns is larger than most traditional *wabi-sabi* spaces. This room is composed of 12 tatami floor mats, therefore technically a *hiroma*. The interior of the *cha-shitsu* is modest with minimal furniture, and a small alcove (*tokonoma*) that exhibits a small scroll and a flower arrangement (*chabana*). On a hot day, the wooden lattice *shōji* style sliding windows and doors are left open to appreciate the idea that being surrounded by the flawed beauty of naturally unique objects helps us. Just outside the guest entrance, grows a *Camellia japonica* cultivar descended from one of the 170 trees that survived the bombing of Hiroshima. The sapling has not yet bloomed, but it is expected to produce red flowers. 27 countries received these plants to symbolize the resiliency of the human spirit and promote the message of world peace. After all, the origin of all teas that we drink is a variety of *Camellia* (*Camellia sinensis*).

The Storrier Stearns Japanese Garden was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2005. It is also a California Historical Landmark on the California Register of Historical Places.



Tea House



Cha-shitsu



Bonsai on Path



Hiroshima Camellia

# SITE PLAN

Arlington Drive



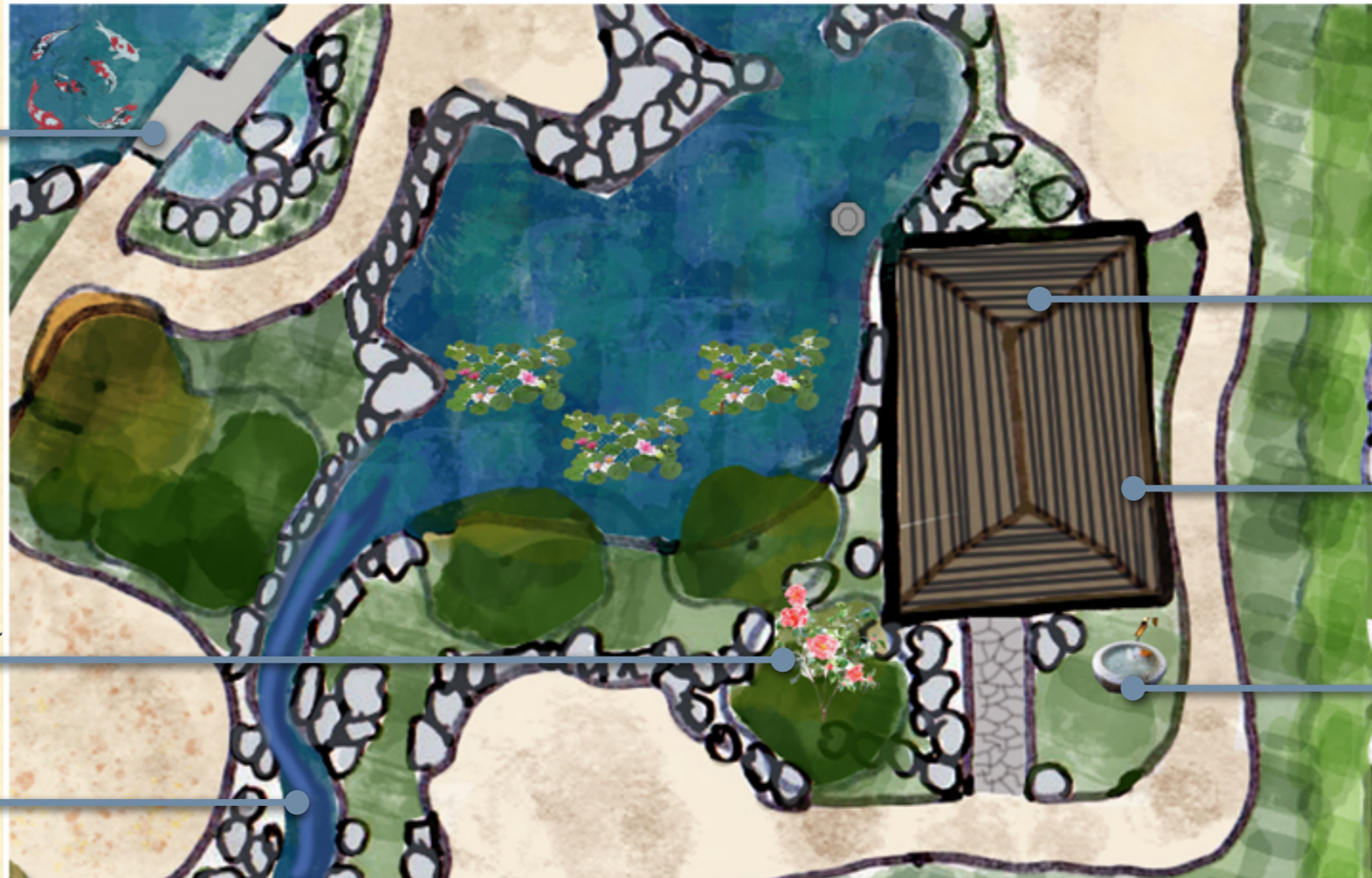
## Legend

1. Waiting Bench
2. First Pond
3. Zigzag Bridge
4. Moon Bridge
5. Second Pond
6. ceremonial tea room (*cha-shitsu*)



# ENLARGEMENT OF TEA HOUSE

Zigzag Bridge



*Cha-shitsu*

*Mizuya*

Hiroshima Camellia

*Tsukubai*

Waterfall

