



Peer Reviewed

Title:

The Garden as a Healing Place [Transforming the American Garden: 12 New Landscape Designs-Exhibitor]

Journal Issue:

[Places, 3\(3\)](#)

Author:

[Healy, Vincent](#)

Publication Date:

1986

Publication Info:

Places

Permalink:

<http://escholarship.org/uc/item/37t114hc>

Acknowledgements:

This article was originally produced in Places Journal. To subscribe visit www.places-journal.org. For reprint information contact places@berkeley.edu.

Keywords:

landscape, architecture, design, garden, place, healing, meditation, vincent healy

Copyright Information:

All rights reserved unless otherwise indicated. Contact the author or original publisher for any necessary permissions. eScholarship is not the copyright owner for deposited works. Learn more at http://www.escholarship.org/help_copyright.html#reuse



eScholarship
University of California

eScholarship provides open access, scholarly publishing services to the University of California and delivers a dynamic research platform to scholars worldwide.

The meditation garden of the past holds answers for developing therapeutic gardens in the future. By producing gardens as settings for the practice of behavioral medicine, we expand on the garden's function in healthcare facilities and nursing homes. Our better understanding of meditation garden traditions will add to the role of the public and private garden as a form of preventative medicine.

The Garden and the Senses

Practitioners of behavioral medicine—which includes relaxation therapy and chronic pain control—will often persuade their patients to focus on two or more of their senses with equal intensity as a means of treatment. As each of us has unique perceptual strengths and weaknesses (some of us are more aware of visual stimulus; others auditory, and so on) the garden, a place which can be designed to reach all of the senses, is an excellent setting for this kind of therapy.

My garden proposal contains elements that aim at more than one of our senses at a time, and with considerable intensity:

Artificial pond:
stocked with bullfrogs
and tree frogs for eve-

ning sounds and
planted with waterlilies
offering year-round
color and fragrance

Surrounding area:
crickets and berry
bushes attractive to
songbirds bring rural
sounds into urban
setting

Garden pavilion:
temperature control
from radiant heating
and bombarded with
negative air ions
interior surfaces
proportioned and tiled
for maximum sound
reverberation
aeolian harps in trees
flanking the pavilion
introduce sound of
wind into room

daylight bouncing
off ripples in reflection
pool adds movement to
prismatic lightbeams
at night, floodlights
in trees beam off water
rather than off glazing,
creating kinetic night
lighting and turning
pavilion into a lantern/
kaleidoscope

black, glass-topped,
sunken banquet table
reflects and deflects
sounds and prismatic
light from windows

fragrance of incense
corresponds to taste
of food eaten in room
smoke gives three-
dimensional emphasis
to colored light beams
wind chimes in trees
tuned to correspond
in quality to moving
prismatic light

Fountain:
radiant heating in pave-

ment surrounding fountain creates warm microclimate at night
fountain's splashing jets emphasize optical tension in tile pattern
pulsing rhythms of the water jet are synchronized with the repetitive tile pattern, creating a mesmerizing effect

high water jet underlit as major focal point in evening
heated, steaming water diffuses light at night and warms immediate area
perfumed water lends fragrance to fountain's surroundings

Garden approach and entry:

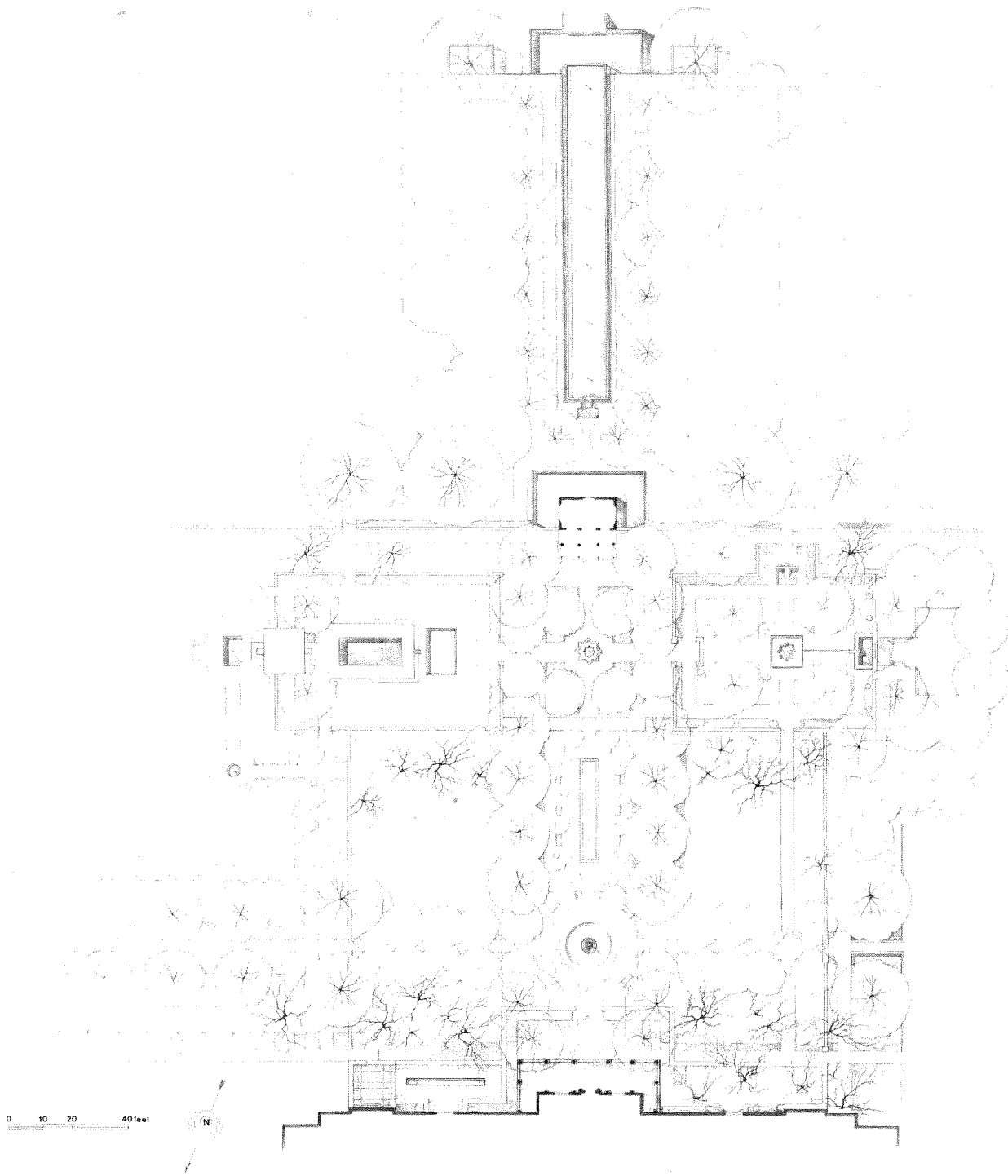
Lombardy poplars in flanking rows along the entry path flicker and rustle during warm months

Cassia multijuga seed pods sound like "whispering castanets"

in winter, stands of dombeya are in full, fragrant bloom and show through the two rows of leafless poplars and *multijuga* along the path

shrubs and ground cover flanking entry path produce a year-round sequence of fragrance especially attractive to hummingbirds and butterflies

whistling acacia with wind chimes and creaking, groaning culms of timber bamboo add drama to garden entry during winter storms and Santa Ana winds



Architectural drawing showing a site plan or floor plan with various building footprints and landscaping elements.