

Japanese Gardens in Small Spaces

2026 Japanese Garden Society National Conference in Milton Keynes on 27th & 28th June.

Learn about Japanese gardens in small spaces created in Japan and the UK.

Saturday provides a listening and learning experience with expert presentations, and time over lunch and an optional dinner to catch up with members and meet Japanese garden enthusiasts. Sunday morning offers a choice of three hands-on workshops: Japanese Garden Design, Ikebana or Bonsai. **Registration ends on 24th May!** [Click here](#) to book your place.

You can stay overnight at the Kent Hill Park Conference Centre, where all these events take place, by going to their website: www.kenthillpark.com/accommodation.

Programme outline

Saturday 27th June 10:30am – 5 pm @ £55

KEYNOTE SPEAKER – Yoko Kawaguchi will be talking about the general history and development of smaller-sized gardens in Japan, bringing us right up-to-date with some examples of *shitsunai-teien* (indoor gardens) and contemporary ideas of *sokutei* (side gardens). Yoko is a freelance writer and cultural historian. Her publications include *Japanese Zen Gardens* and the recently republished *Authentic Japanese Gardens: Creating Japanese Design and Detail in the Western Garden*, and fourteen *Shakkei* articles over the last decade.

Seeking inspiration for my new Japanese garden! – Before lunch there will be an opportunity for three attendees to briefly describe their small garden in need of work (5 minutes). To participate please email three photos and a brief description to 2026Conference@jgs.org.uk before 1st May. If selected, further details will be requested so a scaled drawing can be prepared for the design workshop on Sunday.

LUNCH – buffet lunch hot and cold options (cost included in Registration Fee)

Afternoon session - How I would do it! Hear how three experienced garden designers approach creating Japanese inspired gardens in the UK.

Ai Hishii will discuss the differences and similarities between Japanese and British gardens and then explore the challenges and joys of creating Japanese gardens for town houses. Ai applies traditional Japanese design methodology to create meticulously crafted landscapes and gardens (www.ko-jld.com/). She has also supported Professor Maseo Fukuhara during his visits to the UK to create or advise on renovating Japanese gardens prior to his retirement from Osaka University of Arts.

Masa Taniguchi will explore the wealth of plants suitable for a small garden, and how pre-existing shrubs and trees can be reformed to create Japanese aesthetics in your garden. Masa is the lead horticulturalist at Garden Club London (masa@gardenclublondon.co.uk). Originally from central Japan, he has worked and studied in the UK for over 16 years. 2025 RHS Chelsea

was his first time designing a show garden where he won Gold for *Komorebi*, a container garden (see *Shakkei* Summer 2025).

Howard Healey leads a family business which has been designing and constructing Japanese influenced gardens in UK and Europe for over thirty years (www.buildajapanesegarden.com). He will provide a brief look at how he approaches garden design, what features matter most, and how they navigate limitations and priorities in smaller spaces.

BUFFET DINNER – partakers # may sit together in JGS Conference reserved tables

Dinner Bed and Breakfast must be booked at www.kenthillpark.com/accommodation

To book Dinner and stay elsewhere or go home – additional charge is @ £23 payable to JGS

Sunday 28th June 10 am – 12:30 pm @ £25 - Please choose ONE workshop

Breakfast for attendees staying overnight is served from 7am – 9am

Garden Design Workshop led by Howard Healey – Participants will work in small groups on one of several different garden design case studies. Each group will be provided with site photographs, a client brief, and a scaled drawing, along with scaled cut-outs of garden features to support layout exploration. Participants confident in drawing are welcome to create their own garden elements.

Introduction to Ikebana Workshop led by Ikuyo Morrison (Sogetsu 1st Grade Riji, Founder of Sogetsu London Branch in 2007 – www.sogetsulondon.co.uk) – Ikebana workshop attendees will be able to use a vase, *kenzan* (pin holder) and plant materials (*all supplied by Ikuyo*) for creating a basic form of ikebana display. Participants are asked to bring scissors capable of cutting branches up to the thickness of a little finger (*ikebana scissors are not required*).

Bonsai taster session led by the Milton Keynes Bonsai Society – Learn how to care for bonsai through judicious use of pruning and wiring branches and the aftercare needed to enable it to thrive. After a 20-30 minute illustrated presentation “The Art of Bonsai”, a demonstration of *how to repot and style a bonsai tree* will be provided to participants in small groups. The demonstration trees are all for sale at the end of the session. For more information about the Society see <https://mk8480.wixsite.com/miltonkeynesbonsai>.

Conference CLOSES at 12:30pm

LUNCH (Optional) buffet lunch from 12 noon to 2pm - charge is £ 17.50 payable to JGS

-----0-0-0-0-0-----

The venue is Kents Hill Conference Centre in Milton Keynes (MK7 6BZ) which includes lecture rooms, onsite overnight accommodation, a bar and leisure facilities, and free parking for those who drive. It is a 10-minute taxi ride from the Milton Keynes station, easily accessible from Birmingham or London Euston. [Click here](#) to book your place at the **2026 National Conference**. Book overnight accommodation at: www.kenthillpark.com/accommodation

If you have any queries or difficulties, please email 2026Conference@jgs.org.uk