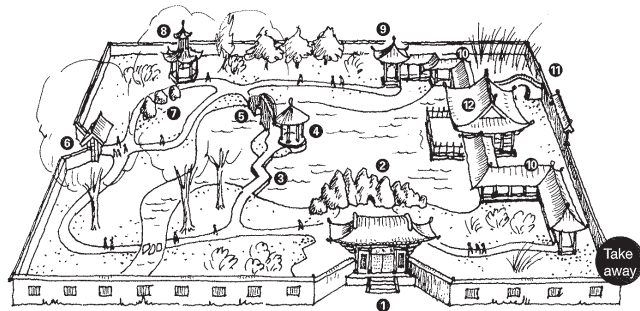


Creation

China Garden Zurich is nestled between Bellerivestrasse and Blatterwiese near Zürichhorn am See. It is a gift from the Chinese partner city Kunming to the citizens of Zurich as a thank you primarily for the technical and scientific help with developing the Kunming drinking water supply and city drainage system. Its construction was made possible by the Zurich water board to celebrate its 125-year anniversary in 1993 and as a «construction art» contribution to the development of its supply systems. The garden was built between May and October 1993 by garden specialists and craftsmen from Kunming and Zurich under the guidance of the garden and parks department of the City of Zurich.



- | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 Main Gate | 5 Arc bridge | 9 Square pavilion |
| 2 Mound | 6 Side gate | 10 Open gallery |
| 3 Zigzag bridge | 7 Rocks | 11 Moon gate & bamboo grove |
| 4 Island & round pavilion | 8 Hexagonal pavilion | 12 Water palace & terrace |

Three friends in the winter



The garden is an expression of one of the key themes in Chinese culture, the «three friends in the winter». This is a reference to three plants which together defy the cold part of the year – the pine, bamboo and wintercherry.

The inscriptions and paintings hint at the unique character of the culture of Yunnan, which has merged a multitude of influences from various ethnic minorities with the traditional culture of Han.

Chine garden design

«When designing a garden, pavilions, paths and small rock mounds and when planting flowers, try to impart the feeling that small is big and big is small and that reality is an illusion and illusion is reality. Some things should remain hidden, others should be plain to see, some should be prominent and others just vague shapes. When arranging a true garden, it is not enough to lay winding paths in a large area with lots of rocks. Anyone who believes that this is all it takes is wasting their time and energy» Shen Fu (mid-18th century).

The wall

The wall separates the outer, profane world from the artistic, ideal microcosm on the inside of the garden – but also keeps out uninvited guests. Windows with lattices of bamboo and lotus flower tiles break up the wall on three sides. The eaves and border bricks as well as the crown friezes of the wall cap have small modelled figures which represent the dragon of the clouds. The corners and ends of the wall cap are adorned with the second of the nine dragon sons, the Chiwen dragon.

The main gate

Above the two wings of the gate hangs the resplendent golden tablet with writing calligraphed by Wang Tingchen, the former mayor of Kunming, which simply translates to «China Garden». Nine rows of nails and the red colour of the gate were originally reserved for the Emperor only in the Central China region. In Yunnan, and particularly in Kunming, however, they have been essential architectural elements in garden complexes for the past 300 years.

The side gate

This was originally the name of the second-to-last gate before entering the inner chambers of the Emperor's court. The carved tablets of the Zurich garden on both sides above the lintel of the gate display extracts of Chinese folklore stories.

The artificial mound

The Chinese name for landscape – «mound and water» – calls up images of the contrast of Yin and Yang. Rock formations are like the bones in the body: they give the garden its strength. But they also separate space and guide the view of the visitor. Island, bridges and island pavilion The arc and zigzag bridge connect the island with the

shore. The Chinese believe that it reminds them of the island of immortal souls. The round pavilion embodies the centre and therefore the fifth Chinese direction. Its inscriptions refer to water as a symbol of friendship between the cities of Kunming and Zurich. As soon as one enters the pavilion, the water level doubles the buildings, thus giving the room a new perspective.

The hexagonal pavilion

This pavilion calls up images of lofty heights with snow drifts in the winter. Its carvings are also full of allegories: the phoenix is the symbol of the Empress and also the symbol of feminine grace, just like the flowers. The interior shows various good luck charms and landscapes.

The square pavilion

This pavilion is the entrance to the open gallery and water palace. Two golden phoenixes fly above its gate. The carved archway is dedicated to spring. The magpie and plum blossoms herald the newly awakening life.

The open gallery

More than 500 landscapes and still lives adorn the open gallery. The carved semi-arches on their traverse beams are a special feature of the gardens in Yunnan. A short, winding path invites visitors to stroll past the bamboo grove and up to the moon gate. Its round shape symbolises abundance and harmony.



The pair of quotes on the left and right of the main gate summarises the geographical location of Kunming between the «Mountain of the Golden Horse» (in the East) and the «Mountain of the Jade-green Cock» (in the North).

The water palace and terrace

The water palace is at the heart of the garden. Its facades, doors and windows have been deliberately painted in plain colours to let visitors focus on the inner qualities of the building. The terrace with its views across the water to all key garden elements extends onto the front of the interior. The shadow garden complements the rear of the palace.



The plants

For the Chinese, trees and flower are more than just images, they are also sources of human feelings and hopes. The existing poplars are integrated in the overall concept of China Garden Zurich.

The shores of the pond are lined with willows whose gentle movements in the breeze remind of the suppleness and grace of dancers. For the Buddhists, water infused with willow branches is pure and holy.

The ginkgo trees between the open gallery and northern wall are also an important feature. The Kunming garden designers arranged them so that they create amazing shadow play on the white wall.

Bamboo is ideal for growing as a dense forest as it gives voice to the wind. When the tall bamboo canes clash together, they create a deep, curious tone which is an integral part of any Chinese garden.

The cedar pine or pine embodies the male principle amongst the trees – their increasingly unconventional growth later on in life symbolises a long life.

The winter cherry is the third partner of the « three friends in the winter ». It blossoms early, in the first slightly warmer days of winter, and is therefore regarded as a happy harbinger of spring.

How to get to the China Garden



China Garden Zurich, Bellerivestrasse at Zürichhorn, tram lines 2 and 4, bus 33 to Höschgasse or Fröhlichstrasse, and buses 912 and 916 to China Garden

Opening times:

May – October: daily from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

November – April: daily from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Free entry

stadt-zuerich.ch/chinagarten

Front image: Michael Reinhard

China Garden Zurich Three friends in winter

