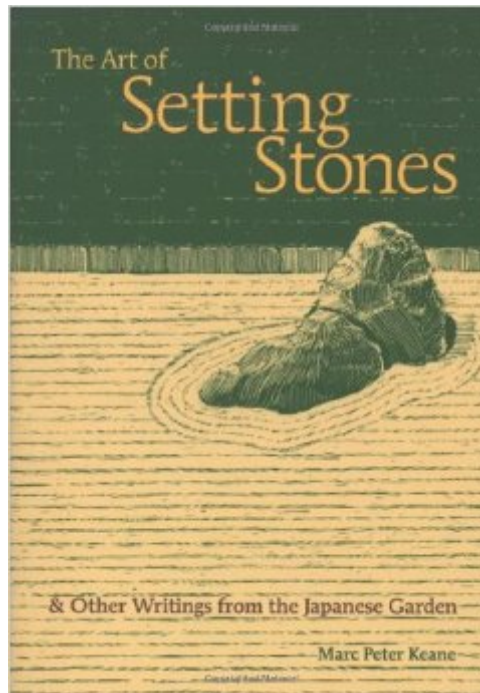


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# The Art Of Setting Stones: And Other Writings From The Japanese Garden



## Synopsis

In Japanese gardens, composition follows from placement of the first stone; all elements and plantings become interconnected. These eight essays on Kyoto gardens similarly begin with keen description and build into richly meditative excursions into art, Buddhism, nature, and science. Landscape architect Marc Keane shows how Japanese gardens are both a microcosm of the natural universe and a clear expression of our humanity, mirroring how we think, worship, and organize our lives and communities. Filled with passages of alluring beauty, this is a truly transcendent book about "experiencing" Japanese design. Marc Peter Keane has lived in Kyoto for 17 years and is author of Japanese Garden Design. He designs residential, company, and temple gardens.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The Art of Setting Stones is a distillation of Mr. Keane's considerable knowledge and experience of Japanese gardens. Mr. Keane is a successful and sought-after landscape architect by profession, but his writings on Japanese gardens are scholarly yet accessible, informative yet enthralling. He consistently demonstrates a synthesis of profession and intellect, art and soul. I would caution the reader who seeks mere knowledge on Japanese gardens. For this, the reader is better served by Mr. Keane's other works, Japanese Garden Design and the tremendous translation of the eleventh-century manual, Sakuteiki. The Art of Setting Stones is a collection of loosely-related essays that expound the conceptual, spiritual and philosophical framework for creating gardens.

The essays are reflective in nature, poetic in style, and deeply learned in content; they provide a patient reader with several evenings of delightful reading. The title of this collection, which comes from the *Sakuteiki*, provides a key to the genesis of Mr. Keane's essays: the act of creating a garden space is ancient and primordial, rooted in our relationship to the very land itself. One of the terms that the *Sakuteiki* uses for the act of creating a garden is "ishi-wo tatsu" - literally, "to raise stones." Mr. Keane's insight comes from years of doing just that.

The author made Kyoto his home after graduating from Cornell University's department of landscape architecture, first as a research fellow of Kyoto University, and later as a landscape architect and writer. He is currently adjunct professor at the Kyoto University of Art and Design, and splits his time between lecturing and practicing landscape architecture from his offices in Ithaca, New York. The 8 essays describe his intimate experience of the Japanese garden and shed light on both the cultural origins as well as the personal meanings he has derived from his years of study and contemplation. His unique perspective is informed by a deep understanding of the historical context of the gardens combined with an appreciation of the spiritual traditions that have defined their aesthetics. Each of the essays is introduced by a black clayboard illustration done by the author, adding a visual interpretation to his often deeply philosophical musings, making this book the most enjoyable writing I have found to date on the Japanese garden.

Not a book on how to make a Japanese garden, but some beautiful essays on the author's experiences of gardens in Kyoto. Very beautiful, love the one with the snow covering a garden during a funeral. Make you think and ponder...

Marc Keane is a landscape architect practicing and teaching in Japan, and in this little gem he does an excellent job of explaining the function of the various components in a Japanese garden, and the function of the garden itself. You learn from reading the title essay that in traditional Japan there was no word corresponding to our "garden". Instead, the phrase "the art of setting stones" was used. This is not a technical manual intended to inform the reader on how to create a Japanese garden. Instead, Keane uses his personal observations and experience to give life to the symbolism endemic to the components of a Japanese garden. The book is comprised of eight essays, each examining a different aspect of the garden, such as "Currents", "Boundaries", "Layers", "Trees", and more. And of course, stones. As an example of his approach, he begins the title essay by describing the setting of stones. How he, along with three other men, using all of their strength, work in unison

to carry a stone and place it correctly. He moves from this description to explain how the setting of stones relates to earlier traditions, and is an affirmation of community. What I enjoyed so much about the book is that he relates the physical components of the garden to larger aspects of life and our relationship to the natural world and to one another. Keane is both a practitioner and a teacher, and his views are a synthesis of direct experience and academic research. He's clearly a man of deep feeling and his presentation is that of a poet.

I have long loved this beautiful collection of essays by Marc Peter Keane...drawing from his work and life in Japan. So glad it is now available on Kindle...and will be one of the books our book club will read this year.

The Setting of Stones is a beautiful book to enjoy and to learn from. It has interesting Japanese historical symbolism, a respect for gardens and nature, as it brings serenity in its poetic prose with added philosophical depth. It is a book to have and to keep.

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