

PROJECT PROFILE



The Shiki-En, or Four Seasons Garden, laces its way through the office buildings of Bannockburn Lake Office Plaza in Lake County, Illinois.

EAST MEETS WEST IN SUBURBAN CHICAGO

Japan's latest export is the serenity and peace of its gardens, which one developer used to further soften his suburban Chicago office complex.

by Will Perry, managing editor

When real estate developer Allen S. Pesmen left his downtown Chicago law practice, one of the things he didn't miss was the congestion and inconvenience of city life. And when he carved his beautifully landscaped Bannockburn Lake Office Plaza out of the woodlands of undeveloped suburban Lake County, he made sure the only thing he brought in from the city was tenants.

The Plaza is a 66-acre development with three (soon to be four) 106,000-square-foot buildings and a health club. Begun in 1977, it was the first of its kind in then-undeveloped southern Lake County.

After 22 years of commuting to

and from the Loop, Pesmen decided he wasn't the only one who would enjoy working in an environment where ponds and trees replaced parking lots and telephone poles. The park's 100 percent occupancy rate attests to Pesmen's accuracy.

Downtown alternative

"It's mostly a whiplash from working downtown," says Pesmen of the Plaza's serene campus. "There the emphasis is up, up, up. If you're really socially conscious in the city, you'll stick a plant in a container box and put it outside your door. Here we've created a peaceful environment that doesn't attempt to be 'the city transported to suburbia.' It's quiet,

relaxing..."

The park's most recent addition is an authentic Japanese garden that will eventually cover 10 to 11 acres of the complex. The garden's inspiration came from Pesmen's fascination with similar gardens in the U.S. and particularly Japan, where gardens offering peace and tranquility exist in the heart of dense, unattractive urban centers. In effect, such gardens mirror the concept of his office complex as an alternative to an inner-city location.

The garden was designed by Takeo Uesugi, Ph.D., a principal of Takeo Uesugi & Assoc. of West Covina, Calif. Uesugi, 48, is a professor of landscape architecture



Chicago's regional landscape is captured in the form of waterfall, stream and the overall "lake-scape" effect of the garden.



The Japanese garden is based upon an ancient garden design book, *Sakuteiki* (1040 A.D.), where traditional techniques are expressed in the planting, mounding, stepping-stones and methodical rock arrangements.



Allen S. Pesmen, left, president of Bannockburn Park Concepts, Inc., and his son Brian.

at California State Polytechnic University in Pomona and a 15th generation landscape architect.

Other Uesugi projects include the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center Garden in Los Angeles, the Naiman Tech Center, San Diego, and Epson Madrona, in Torrance, Calif. Pesmen believes that the Bannockburn garden, *Shiki-En*, or Four Seasons Garden, will be the largest private Japanese garden outside California.

Garden makeup

The first phase of the garden features a tea house, waterfalls, lanterns and bridges. Plants common in Japanese gardens and adaptable to

the Chicago climate are incorporated among existing woods and lakes. Pine trees provide dignity and durability. Willows express flexibility. Magnolias enchant. Crabapples, plums and redbud capture the sense of spring. Maples and river birch capture autumn. If he can find a variety of bamboo that can withstand the harsh Midwest winter, Pesmen hopes to plant it as well.

The garden holds more than one million pounds of boulders brought in from Wisconsin and North Carolina, as well as Nitto granite from Japan. The boulders are white to dark grey in color, rough to intermediate in texture, and rugged to tranquil in form. The

Japanese concept of *In and Yo*, or negative and positive, and the numbers of 7, 5, and 3 are incorporated to achieve symmetrical balance in the garden.

Two islands reach into the main pond, symbolizing a turtle and a crane which represent longevity and cheerfulness, respectively.

Bannockburn Lake Office Plaza has an in-house landscape crew. Pesmen says maintaining the garden has been a new yet welcome challenge for them. Ornamentals were planted by the Theodore Brickman Co. of Long Grove, as well as a commercial division of Amlings Nursery of Hinsdale and Miles Lindblad of the architecture firm of Krucek and Olsen. **LM**