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BOOK REVIEW

FLEIG-HARBAUER, G.: DER JAPANISCHE GARTEN — WEGE ZU MODERNER GESTALTUNG. — BLV Verlagsgesellschaft, München—Wien—Zürich 1981. 143 pp. Hard cover DM 49,80, ÖS. 410,—, Sfr. 49,80.

In the present world with a steadily increasing technical development and urbanization the Man becomes more and more estranged from nature. The technique facilitates and rationalizes human activity in many fields but, on other hand, it changes the configuration of the living environment — a high level of decibels disturbs a previously quiet landscape, the verdure is replaced by concrete, iron and synthetic substances, and monotonous grey predominates over a vivid display of colours. The concentration of inhabitants in towns makes the interhuman relations easier but simultaneously leads to a sense of estrangement, lonesomeness and stress situations in the life of individuals. No wonder that there is an ever increasing number of those who seek rest, composure and equilibrium in nature which, regrettably, is on the wane nowadays. This stimulates the effort to use every however small area to preserve or revive the beauty of the living nature and contribute to harmonious relations between its parts and between it, as a whole, and the urban environs. A prefiguration of this effort — even though issuing from other historical and social conditions — are the Japanese gardens and parks. They are distinguished by simplicity and beauty, using natural materials in their original form and colour to a maximum extent.

The book reviewed acquaints the reader with the different types of gardens, pointing out the differences in their architectonic style and in the function of individual components, and informs about the aesthetic effect of plants, water sheets and natural materials — wood, sand and stones. A collection of black-and-white and colour photographs accompanies the reader through ancient temple and palace gardens (Kyôto, Tokyo) and through parks of modern cities (e.g. Osaka). The comparison of the architecture of a Japanese garden with the architectonic lay-out of large European gardens and parks (palace parks in West Germany) is instructive particularly for an expert. An amateur horticulturist will appreciate the closing part of the book, which brings ideas how to apply the functional and aesthetic elements typical of the Japanese gardens in both large public parks and miniature private gardens of other countries. The book will delight not only a nature-fancier but also an expert-biologist, as it shows the importance of his vocation in helping people to find spiritual recreation.

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