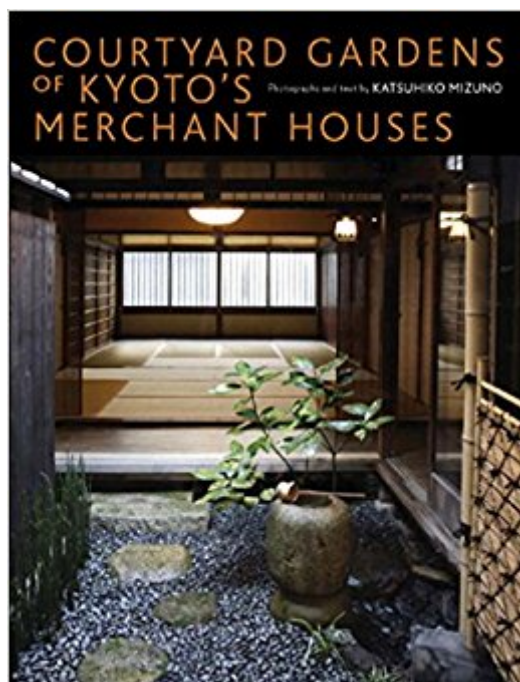


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Courtyard Gardens Of Kyoto's Merchant Houses



Synopsis

One of the pleasures of visiting Kyoto is to wander around narrow streets lined with machiya, the traditional townhouses of the merchant class. Tucked away inside each of these unusually long, narrow dwellings is a hidden oasis: a small garden known as the tsuboniwa. Following on from *Landscapes for Small Spaces* and *The Hidden Gardens of Kyoto*, the third book by garden enthusiast and photographer Katsuhiko Mizuno focuses on these miniature courtyard gardens of the machiya. A wide variety of gardens are beautifully photographed and presented: from those in shops, inns, restaurants, and tearooms, to gardens in many private homes. A total of 150 color images from fifty-two houses showcase the flawless Kyoto aesthetic and use of limited space. Surrounding architectural features, such as shoji sliding doors, reed blinds, beams, railings, and walkways are also featured. Each photograph is accompanied by analytical and insightful comments from the author, making this a useful reference book for all garden lovers, as well as a visual feast for anyone with an interest in traditional Japanese design.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A library of Japanese courtyard designs. More than 150 color photographs and diagrams offer several hundred landscape design ideas for small spaces." —*Washington Post*

"A study of the interior gardens of the former Imperial City that proves how sympathetic in scale, proportion and detailing the ancient Japanese garden aesthetic can be to domestic environments." —*Metropolitan Home*

KATSUHIKO MIZUNO, born in Kyoto in 1941, graduated from Doshisha University and the Tokyo College of Photography. His photographs are on display in the Kyoto townhouse he renovated and converted into a museum.

In the interest of promoting an obscure but great book (and hopefully reminding Japanese garden fans to add it to their collection), I'd like to sing the praises of this particular book. It is one of MY favorites, at any rate. Another of author Mizuno's books, his "Landscapes For Small Spaces", is probably more widely known since it won an award (a Gold Medal in the Foreword 2002 Book of the Year Awards)...and while that one is well-deserving of attention, this present book to my mind offers even more for small-garden ideas. Most books on Kyoto gardens, of course, focus on the famous larger gardens surrounding Kyoto. While perusing books with pics on some of the big Kyoto gardens - such as Kinkakuji, Katsura Detached Palace, Tofukuji, the Daitokuji or Nanzenji complexes, etc. - is undoubtedly inspirational in itself, for practical purposes these large-scale gardens aren't the best place for the average home gardener to help figure out what to do with one's yard. One can of course gleam ideas from any sized garden by focusing on a particular area, but there aren't many books out revealing some of the charming small gardens found at various merchant houses, restaurants, and residences on the side-roads around Kyoto. And these, my garden friends, are precisely what one *ought* to be contemplating thoroughly if the idea is to design and build one's own backyard garden. Unless, of course, one owns enough land with a huge lake on the property, where one can boat leisurely around during idle hours enjoying the views, like the wealthy daimyo did in old Japan :-). I'm guessing most of us don't fit into that category. If you do fit, go read another review...I've had enough of you already. The book is divided into three main sections: 1) merchant houses; 2) restaurants and teahouses; and 3) residences...all displaying the distinctive machiya (traditional wooden townhouse) style of small gardens, which came to be known as "tsubo-niwa" (usually translated as "courtyard gardens"). Although several small-garden schematic layouts are offered at the end, the book is not - properly speaking - a "how-to" type of book, as another reviewer noted. But let's not miss something important here. Many Westerners who have a love of the Japanese garden-styles out of necessity rely on the available picture books for ideas on traditional design. One problem with this scenario is that, as I mentioned above, the typical Japanese garden book tends to focus on the big gardens, which can often overwhelm the beginner who is looking for ideas for a small space...such as a corner, or perhaps a stepping-stone path through a (narrow) side of the house, or more ambitiously, turning the front or back yard into a Japanese-style garden. While getting ideas from big gardens can be helpful, what is really needed

are books which focus particularly on smaller-scale compact gardens. These, of course, have been perfected over many hundreds of years in urban Kyoto, where narrow streets and severely limited space have dictated constraints on extravagances :-). Hence, books on small-area gardens, i.e. - the distinctive tsuboniwa or courtyard designs - are particularly welcome as inspiration for the average home-owner to get some great ideas. This book fills the need admirably. And herein is something of value even to self-professed landscape designers. Landscapers wanting to develop their skills at building residential Japanese-style gardens surely realize there is no finer place to go for grabbing useful ideas and concepts than the "machiya"-style arrangements on the side roads of Kyoto. A book like this serves essentially as a book of "recipes" for small-garden design...templates, as it were, of design ideas. The more one desires to absorb the techniques of the traditional masters in these small gardens, the more books like this one become a trusted reference. Indeed, almost every-other-page of the book, without much exaggeration, has garden views which fire the imagination and illustrate nicely the sophisticated mastery of constrained spaces that the Japanese are famous for. Bottom line here is, all Japanese-garden lovers should make an effort to obtain this book (and others by Mizuno are recommended as well).

This is a beautiful book. The paper is great quality. I love it. It makes me feel peaceful just looking at the pictures. I haven't read the text due to vision problems.

One of the very best books available regarding small-scale Japanese gardens. It is a source of inspiration and admiration, not a how-to book. The photography is great; the choices of courtyards and the historical background and explanations are very well written. A lovely book well worth adding to your shelf. I've found that it is very hard to find good photographs of such gardens on the internet, so a book like this is the only way to see these wonderful gardens, outside of visiting Kyoto directly.

A superb volume and the best book by Katsuhiko Mizuno so far. Highly recommended!

This book is filled with tranquil Japanese gardens which beckon you to pause and look for a while. I bought this as a gift and was very pleased.

Kyoto is one of the most aesthetically refined cities in the world. In the summer, it's also one of the hottest. So naturally this fine city's residents beat the heat in a manner both tastefully elegant and

ingeniously functional. And that's the subject of this lavishly illustrated book: tsuboniwa, smallish gardens set within the structure of Kyoto's machiya townhouses so as to facilitate the flow of cool air through the premises as well as provide a little microcosmic world apart. While significantly informed by the conventions of teahouse "roji" and Buddhist temple layout, these diminutive landscapes tucked within the bustling merchant households of the urban and urbane old capital have a sense and a style all their own, one that's beautifully communicated through Katsuhiko Mizuno's fine full-page photographs and his insightfully expert if occasionally gushing commentary. The many kinds of rocks and stones serving as the principle elements of design and texture in these gardens are explained in full (with a handy list in the back), and something of the history of many of the old venerable townhouses featured in these pages is touched upon as well. All in all, then, this is a gorgeous coffee-table book that's also nicely informative. And it's great for breezing through with an ice-cool glass of mugi-cha tea. Check it out!

This book is full of good ideas for shade gardens. There are beautiful photos on every page, and I keep the book on my desk for inspiration.

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