

GARDENS

MEDITATIVE NATURE

'An ancient cultural form that is potent, mysterious and esoteric,' is how British landscape designer Sophie Walker describes the subject of her new book, *The Japanese Garden* (on sale 30 October, Phaidon, £49.95). As well as digging into the history of popular oriental motifs, such as the cherry blossom, the book features a timeline of key periods in Japanese horticultural history and a garden-themed map of Japan. Here are five of our favourite entries.



KAHITSUKAN KYOTO MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, Kyoto (1) The tree perforating the Sun Garden – the top floor of this art gallery – was a trailblazing feature when first unveiled. 'This small courtyard garden distils the fundamentals of Japanese design,' Walker writes, 'consisting simply of moss, two rocks and a single acer tree that grows towards the sky.'



KÔRAKU-EN, Okayama (2) During the celebrated Edo period in Japan (1603–1868), imperial palace gardens typically included decorative additions, such as pavilions and moon-viewing platforms. 'In towns, public parks echoed the features of the imperial gardens,' says Walker. Kôroku-en is one of those beautiful public spaces – its name literally translates to English as 'garden for taking pleasure later'.

SHISEN-DÔ, Kyoto (3) The temple that this garden surrounds was built by a 17th-century intellectual, who lived here in exile, dedicating his time to the lofty matters of tea, poetry and calligraphy. The enchanting plot is all about form, with its

voluptuous topiary. 'Clipped azalea bushes appear like clouds lingering on the surrounding hills,' describes Walker.

ISE JINGŪ, Ise (4) Walker says that this sacred site is a proto-garden of Japan. Set within a forest of ancient hinoki cypress and sakaki trees on the banks of the Isuzu river, it is home to over 100 shrines, and was created between the third and fifth centuries to celebrate the sun goddess Amaterasu.

ADACHI MUSEUM GARDEN, Yasugi (5) 'The founder of this garden-museum complex, Zenkō Adachi, believed that the garden could be composed as a living painting, as great as any work of art,' writes Walker, pointing out the garden's confusing scale – the petite pines, trimmed *niwaki*-style (a technique known in the UK as 'cloud-pruning'), resemble looming trees, and the curving hillocks look like rolling valleys.

