

LIVING

'Japanese' garden blooms in Salem

By BETTY MUNRO
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SALEM — There's a tranquil reflection of Japan near the shore in South Salem.

Nestled in a formerly treed lot on the property of Paul and Patricia LaBrie, is a garden based on the Japanese concept of Sakkei which emphasizes a flow or "shared view" between a garden and its surroundings.

Seated in the multi-widowed kitchen of the LaBrie's garrison-style home, Pat LaBrie and Boston landscape artist Bruce Applebaum, owner of Garden of Earthly Designs in Cambridge, discuss the two-year project they planned together.

They were overlooking a panorama of beauty on 6,500 square feet of land which is bordered on one side by the sea and dotted with four authentic granite torii (lanterns) that Paul LaBrie purchased from a Korean quarry.

Although a blustery Novem-

ber wind blew from Salem Harbor, flashes of colors remain in the garden. It was planned to shine through the four seasons in New England.

"It all began two years ago," said LaBrie. She was impressed

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— Patricia LaBrie

by the "serenity" of gardens in Japan during four trips there with her husband, owner of an electronics manufacturing business, when she decided to create her own.

The homeowner and the landscape artist have a lot in common.



Framed by their work in the LaBrie's yard, Patricia LaBrie and Bruce Applebaum pour over details of their plans to construct a 'Japanese' garden. Below, one of the garden's special features.

The Salem News/Kirk Williamson

She was captivated by the Far Eastern culture and he was involved in the restoration of a Zen temple there after studying at three separate campuses of the State University of

New York, later studying philosophy, solar energy and holistic environment.

"I spotted an advertisement Bruce had placed in Boston Magazine, later contacting him to help develop a garden I had in mind," she said, reviewing a blueprint of original and painstaking plans that have been completed.

The pair worked with LaBrie's suggestions combined with Applebaum's ideas.

The recipient of a BS degree in holistic environments from the College at New Paltz in New York, Applebaum said "I base my designs on aesthetics," adding this includes "the accent of four seasons."

Materials for his Japanese gardens include many evergreens, bronze ferns, dwarf hemlock and myrtle. Unlike many authentic oriental gardens, Applebaum incorporates edible fruit and herbs, in addition to decorative shrubs and flowers.

Applebaum's work enabled him to study at the New York Botanical Gardens and Arnold arboretum.

"We have all sorts of birds stopping here to feed, including geese," LaBrie explained, as a Canadian variety waddled near the water.

Before removing 30 sugar maples that originally stood on the site, LaBrie said she and her husband consulted neighbors to find if any objected to the idea.

With everyone's consent, work began in earnest, with one willow tree remaining to provide a contrast to low-growing shrubs.

The tall tree is the focus of one of several spotlights dramatizing the effects at night. "The view is spectacular at sunrise, too" added LaBrie.

There's a "windswept" Japanese black pine by the seawall, cultivated that way to create an image of bending toward the water, Applebaum pointed out. "It's been pruned for effect," he



explained.

Winter berries, Scotch heather and sea lavender color the created countryside. Applebaum scoured Plum Island for seaside plant ideas for the Salem garden.

"Every view is framed," he said, explaining a pair of golden chain trees frame one of the entrances. Natural "sitting stones" have been placed in strategic positions for a relaxing scenic view, "incorporating harmony and balance."

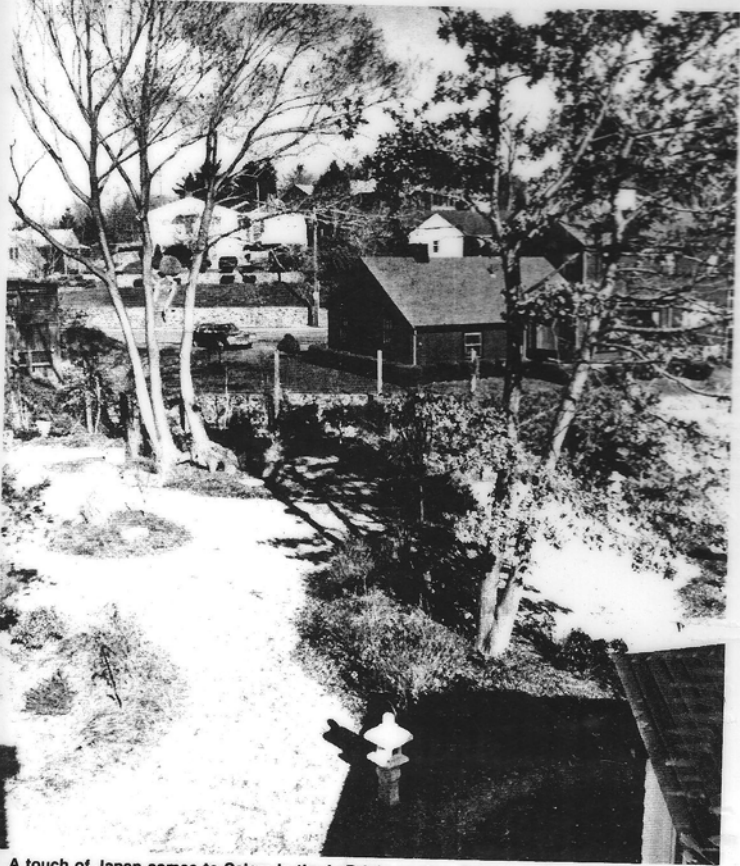
White pea stone cover the many paths through the area that will have a "tapestry wall" on one side, replacing what might have been a tall fence

with a series of flowering vines and special shrubbery.

"We held an opening night for the garden. A business friend of ours from Japan came here for the weekend to help us celebrate. Bruce brought along some breakdancers, so it was quite an evening," remembers LaBrie, standing near a clump of switchgrass, accented by a torii.

Applebaum does not confine his designs to oriental influences.

He has also landscaped with an "old Boston" feeling in that city's South End.



A touch of Japan comes to Salem in the LaBrie's garden. Patricia LaBrie began planning the garden after she became delighted with the serenity of the gardens she saw in the Orient.

The Salem News/Kirk Williamson