



## LANDSCAPE PROJECTS



**MOTOYOSHI KIHARA**  
Lead designer and Founder  
Kihara Landscapes

# SENSE OF SANCTUARY

Fusing traditional Japanese and modern Australian elements, this Victorian garden is a haven of calm

When the call went out to Japanese garden specialist Motoyoshi Kihara, founder of Kihara Landscapes, this new home was nearing completion. Original landscaping plans had been prepared by Jack Merlo Design together with Orbis Constructions, but one of the homeowners is Japanese and wanted a genuine Japanese garden designed and constructed by a Japanese garden professional.

The home includes a Japanese tea room, complete with imported tatami mats, which overlooks one section of the garden. It was

here that Kihara Landscapes was asked to design and construct a very traditional garden — one the owner could look out on when enjoying the Japanese tea ceremony.

Kihara Landscapes was also charged with building the remaining outdoor areas. Other parts of the home are more contemporary so the adjacent garden areas needed a more modern, yet traditionally minimalist Japanese style. There were practical issues to address, too. As the homeowners are of retirement age, ease of access to all areas was vital — this included incorporating gradual steps leading up to the front door.

And as their grandchildren regularly come to visit and play, soft fall spaces were needed.

Japanese gardens are designed to appeal to all of the senses, which is why, in the outdoor area next to the tea room, there is a water feature comprised of a granite water bowl and bamboo spout. The sound of water dropping is an essential element in a Japanese garden, one that stills the mind. Referencing the water bowl, there is a granite lantern and granite paving. Granite was also used as paving in other areas around the home, creating a sense of connection.

The merbau deck in another part of the garden was left unstained to create a balance between new and old, which is typical of the Japanese aesthetic “wabi-sabi”, a guiding principle of traditional Japanese design.

Plant selection was an essential part of the process, with Motoyoshi striving to create a planting scheme as close as possible to what you would see in Japan, but using locally sourced plants. The planting palette provides year-round interest and includes *Bambusa textilis* ‘Gracilis’, a non-clumping



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bamboo that adds greenery. The sound of wind flowing through bamboo is also a crucial element of the Japanese garden.

Other traditional plants found in the garden include Japanese weeping maples, camellias and two kinds of Japanese cherry blossom trees — Fuji and Yoshino. As a non-weeping variety, the Yoshino was tricky to source, but well worth the effort. There is also Japanese box hedging, gardenias and ginkgo biloba, which add interest and provide the perfect finishing flourishes.

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### PROJECT DETAILS

Landscape design and construction  
**KIHARA LANDSCAPES**

**Address** 1A Paran Place, Glen Iris Vic 3146

**Mobile** 0424 982 876

**Email** [info@kiharalandscapes.com.au](mailto:info@kiharalandscapes.com.au)

**Website** [kiharalandscapes.com.au](http://kiharalandscapes.com.au)

Photography by Patrick Redmond

