

SENSE OF SERENITY

Be it a stone basin and spout or running stream, nothing is as soothing to the senses as a traditional Japanese water feature

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Over the years we have built many Japanese style water features for our clients; some simple basins in small courtyards, others large backyard ponds. With an increase in the number of Australians travelling to Japan, Japanese style water features have become even more popular. People love Japan and the beautiful gardens they see there so having a Japanese water feature of their own is a great way to remember their travels.

Things to consider

If you're thinking about a Japanese water feature, you need to consider four main things: the size of your garden, style and construction method, amount of maintenance required and cost. The Tsukubai — comprised of a spout and water basin — is a good option for many as it is small, easy to construct and needs minimal maintenance.

The traditional Japanese Tsukubai has a bamboo water spout which slowly drips water into a stone water basin underneath but the style can be customised to suit almost any setting. A more modern interpretation is to use a copper pipe instead of a bamboo spout and a concrete basin instead of a stone one.

Just remember that a Japanese garden should embrace all the senses so the basin should be surrounded by lush green planting to engage the eye and complement the sound of the gently flowing water.

Practical matters

In traditional times, the water bowl needed regular cleaning and stagnant water was a problem. These days we install an electric pump to circulate the water. Installing a pump reduces the amount of water required and avoids the need for chlorine. In the summer months, having a pump circulate the water will also keep the water free of algae and keep mosquitoes from nesting in the basin.

There aren't usually any water leakage issues with the water bowl, however you need to be aware that water naturally evaporates so you will have to add water from time to time so the pump doesn't burn out due to lack of running water. Setting up the pump with a digital timer is a good way to ensure this doesn't become a problem.

For larger gardens

A large-scale pond or flowing stream is the dream for many. Picture natural rock forms, water tumbling into a fish-filled pond and

surrounds planted with Japanese maples. This kind of garden is usually only found in shrines, temples and traditional Japanese inns. In Australia, we are lucky enough to have the space in many of our gardens to achieve something like this.

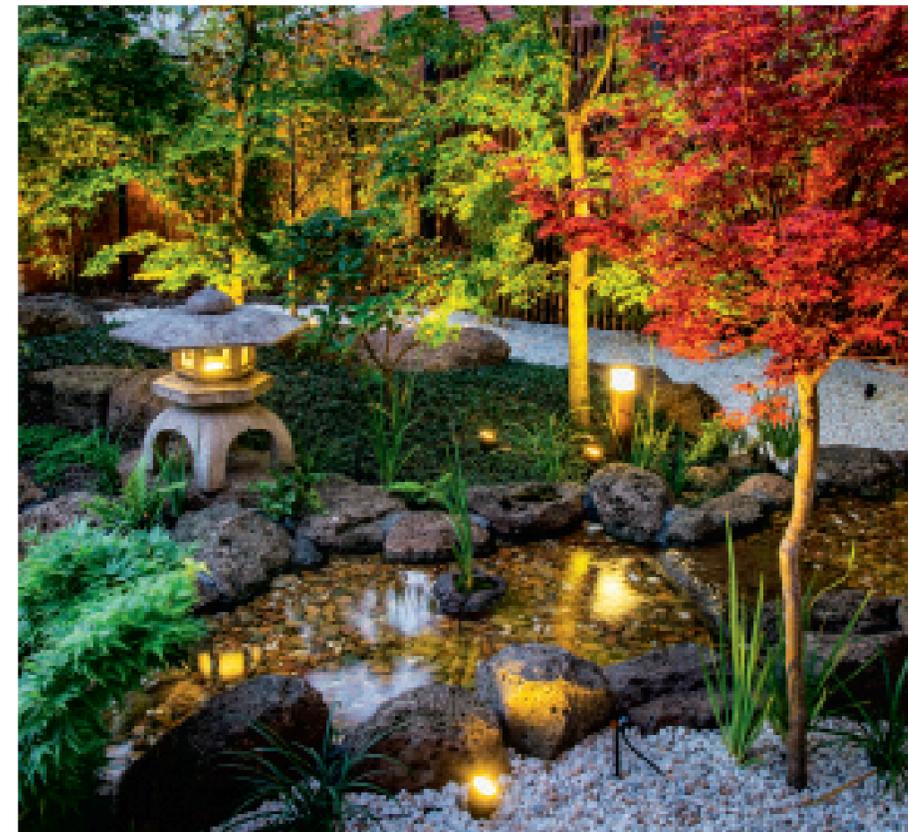
Building a pond or stream is not easy so you need expert guidance. Also, a larger stream or pond requires a higher level of maintenance so invest in quality pumps and filters. This is especially important if you plan to have fish in the pond as you won't be able to use chemicals to keep the water clear. Water plants can help but algae will grow in sunnier positions so you need to get the location right at the design stage.

Replicating nature

Pond construction methods vary, from concrete (which costs more) to using a pond liner to contain the water in-ground (best suited to natural-looking ponds). The pond edge will be determined by the shape and size of the rocks. When choosing rocks, go to your local quarry and look for rocks with interesting, aesthetically pleasing shapes and forms.

In a traditional Japanese garden, a stream would typically follow a convoluted path leading from nearby mountains. The most successful man-made streams tell a story, create intrigue and encourage the viewer to wonder where the stream started.

Whatever style of Japanese water feature you choose, it will bring tranquility to your garden and create a peaceful outlook you can enjoy from your home.



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