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#### THE PEACEFUL PLACEMENT OF PLANTS

*Kathy Renwald*

The new Itabashi Garden at the Tansley Woods Community Centre in Burlington offers a beautiful experience in a type of garden we rarely see here. It is just months old, and yet it is captivating.

We look at our gardens and pine for flowers and colour when right before us there is beauty in texture, form and leaf shape.

This reverence for the subtle is a pillar of Japanese garden design.

The new Itabashi Garden at the Tansley Woods Community Centre in Burlington offers a beautiful experience in a type of garden we rarely see here.

It is just months old, and yet it is captivating. The way the leaves of the Japanese maples quiver over stone, the twisting needles of a false cypress and the polished beauty of unusual pine cones: these small moments elevate a stroll along the meandering garden path.

The Itabashi Garden honours the 30th anniversary of the twinning of the cities of Burlington and Itabashi, Japan.

On a recent Sunday, I ran into the garden's designer, landscape architect Virginia Burt ([www.vburtdesigns.com](http://www.vburtdesigns.com)). It was nearing dusk and the garden was being photographed in advance of the grand opening on July 1.

Since November, Burt has spent many hours with Environmental Design Landscape Contractors working on this small parcel of land behind the community centre.

The setting gave her two important things to work with: some existing stone, and a backdrop of trees from nearby Shoreacres Creek.

"It's shekkei, the borrowed landscape; that woodland backdrop gives the garden a high level of maturity," Burt said as she checked the finishing touches on the garden.

New gardens can often be boring, and municipal gardens favour safe formulas. That's why the Itabashi Garden, a City of Burlington project, is such a delightful surprise. The layers and levels, the stone pagoda, and dry waterfall, the views revealed along the curves of the path, the amount of interest is striking for a garden so young.

Burt made at least 12 trips to Connon and NVK Nurseries selecting Japanese maples and evergreens. Many more hours were consumed with the minute adjustments needed for the placement of stone.

"People love the stone in the garden. We were able to use 55 pieces of leftover armour stone on site, and because it was old, it had weathered in interesting ways," Burt says.

She did select some special rocks with mosses and crevices, and one with deposits of quartz running like stripes through the limestone. They are placed carefully with the plants and sometimes intrude on the path, softening rigid lines one wouldn't find in nature.

A Japanese garden plunked in the middle of suburban Burlington could come off as artificial and stiff. Burt was careful to avoid creating a museum piece by weaving our plants and iconic landscapes into the design. Native redbuds, ironwood and white pines have proud places in the garden; Canada anemone adds a fluffy carpet at ground level.

“My goal was to use Japanese principals with local materials. The armour stone was from Nelson Quarry, and my hikes on the Bruce Trail brought inspiration from the Niagara Escarpment into the design,” Burt says.

This thoughtful melding of style and culture is something any gardener can ponder while walking through the Itabashi Garden. Burt, who specializes in healing landscapes and sacred spaces, calls it creating a garden with clear intention. “It’s part of your story, a garden of meaning and time and place.”

The twinning of Burlington and Itabashi, Japan, will be celebrated in the public opening of the garden July 1 at 10:45 a.m. The Burlington Mundialization Committee will be there sharing the message of peaceful co-operation, many dignitaries are expected, but the star will be the garden.

“It will take time to fill in,” Burt says. “But it’s ready to carry the torch of peace and co-operation now.”

**SOURCE**

<https://www.thespec.com/living-story/9455318-kathy-renwald-the-peaceful-placement-of-plants/>