



Research Paper

Minimalism and Naturalism in Japanese Garden design

Supriya Gupta*, Aparna Awasthi and Purnima A. Beohar
Institute of Agricultural Sciences, Rani Durgavati Vishwa Vidyalaya Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, India.

*Corresponding author email: sg849279@gmail.com

Received: 09/09/2026

Revised: 18/09/2026

Accepted: 22/09/2026

Abstract: Japanese gardens are a traditional form of landscape design based on harmony between humans and nature. Minimalism and naturalism are two important principles of Japanese garden design. Minimalism emphasizes simplicity, limited elements and open spaces, while naturalism uses natural forms, asymmetry and organic arrangements. The present study examined major garden elements such as rocks, water, plants, gravel, pathways and open spaces using a descriptive and qualitative approach. The study found that these elements are carefully selected and arranged to create natural-looking, peaceful and balanced landscapes. Japanese garden principles also have potential for sustainable and modern landscape design.

Keywords: Japanese garden, Minimalism, Naturalism, Asymmetry, Sakuteiki, Landscape design

Introduction:

Japanese garden design is a traditional landscape art that emphasizes simplicity,

harmony and connection with nature. Unlike formal gardens based on rigid symmetry, Japanese gardens use natural materials such as rocks, water, plants, gravel and pathways in carefully planned arrangements. Minimalism focuses on using fewer but meaningful elements, while naturalism creates a natural appearance through irregular forms and asymmetry. Together, these principles create peaceful and aesthetically meaningful landscapes (Jore, 1978; Kuitert, 2002).

Methodology:

The study followed a descriptive and qualitative approach. Information was collected from historical texts, books, research papers and reliable institutional sources related to Japanese garden design. The Sakuteiki was used as an important historical source for understanding the arrangement of stones, water, plants and other garden elements. Major characteristics such as simplicity, open space, asymmetry, natural materials and symbolic

representation of natural landscapes were studied and compared.

Results:

The study revealed that minimalism and naturalism are closely connected in Japanese garden design. The major elements identified were rocks, water, plants, gravel or sand, pathways and open spaces. Rocks provide structure and may represent mountains or islands. Water provides movement, reflection and tranquillity. Plants add seasonal character, while gravel and open spaces reduce visual overcrowding. Asymmetrical arrangements create a natural-looking balance.

The study also showed that a small number of carefully selected elements can represent larger natural landscapes such as mountains, rivers, forests and islands. Thus, Japanese gardens achieve greater visual meaning without excessive decoration.

Discussion: Minimalism in Japanese gardens does not simply mean using fewer objects; it involves selecting and positioning each element with a specific purpose. Open or empty spaces are also important because they provide visual balance and tranquillity. Naturalism is expressed through irregular rocks, organic pathways, natural materials and asymmetrical arrangements. The Sakuteik emphasizes adapting garden design to site characteristics and natural scenery, showing that Japanese naturalism is a carefully designed interpretation of nature rather than leaving nature completely untouched. The findings are consistent with Jore (1978), Kuitert (2002) and Takei and Keane (2001), who highlighted simplicity, naturalness and careful arrangement as important characteristics of Japanese gardens. The combination of minimalism and naturalism also has value for modern

landscape design because it encourages the use of natural materials, restrained planting and efficient use of space.

Conclusion:

Japanese garden design demonstrates that simplicity and naturalness can be combined to create harmonious and peaceful landscapes. Minimalism provides visual clarity through limited elements and open spaces, whereas naturalism creates a connection with natural forms and scenery. Rocks, water, plants, gravel and pathways work together to create balance and tranquillity. These principles can also be adapted to modern and Indian landscapes using local materials, native plants and efficient use of water and space.

Acknowledgements:

I sincerely thank my teachers and institution for their guidance and support in completing this study. I am also thankful to the authors and researchers whose published work provided valuable information for this research.

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