



The Gardens of Suzhou (Penn Studies in Landscape Architecture)

Ron Henderson

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Suzhou, near Shanghai, is among the great garden cities of the world. The city's masterpieces of classical Chinese garden design, built from the eleventh through the nineteenth centuries, attract thousands of visitors each year and continue to influence international design. In *The Gardens of Suzhou*, landscape architect and scholar Ron Henderson guides visitors through seventeen of these gardens. The book explores UNESCO world cultural heritage sites such as the Master of the Nets Garden, Humble Administrator's Garden, Lingering Garden, and Garden of the Peaceful Mind, as well as other lesser-known but equally significant gardens in the Suzhou region.

Unlike the acclaimed religious and imperial gardens found elsewhere in Asia, Suzhou's gardens were designed by scholars and intellectuals to be domestic spaces that drew upon China's rich visual and literary tradition, embedding cultural references within the landscapes. The elements of the gardens confront the visitor: rocks, trees, and walls are pushed into the foreground to compress and compact space, as if great hands had gathered a mountainous territory of rocky cliffs, forests, and streams, then squeezed it tightly until the entire region would fit into a small city garden.

Henderson's commentary opens Suzhou's gardens, with their literary and musical references, to non-Chinese visitors. Drawing on years of intimate experience and study, he combines the history and spatial organization of each garden with personal insights into their rockeries, architecture, plants, and waters. Fully illustrated with newly drawn plans, maps, and original photographs, *The Gardens of Suzhou* invites visitors, researchers, and designers to pause and observe astonishing works from one of the world's greatest garden design traditions.

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