



Botanical Garden Programs: Japanese Garden

SEASONAL SCROLL PAINTING

Art and Observation in the Japanese Garden



Grades 4–7

I. Introduction

In preparation for a school visit to the Huntington Botanical Gardens' Japanese Garden tour, we will create scroll paintings based on seasonal change in the garden. Traditional Japanese scroll painting will be introduced, and we will discuss different plants and seasonal changes as subject matter.

II. Objective

- ◆ To encourage close observation of plants and seasonal change in the Japanese garden through making a scroll painting.

III. Standards Assessed

Visual Arts Standards California Board of Education, adopted January, 2001

Standard 1.0

Artistic Perception: Processing, analyzing, and responding to sensory information through the language and skills unique to the visual arts.

Standard 2.0

Creative Expression: Creating, performing, and participating in the visual arts.

Standard 3.0

Historical and Cultural Context: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and culture.

Standard 4.0

Aesthetic Valuing: Responding to, analyzing, and making judgments about works in the visual arts.

IV. Background

Japanese Scroll Painting

In the Japanese house at the Huntington, you will see two hanging scroll paintings. Each one is hung in a tokonoma, which is a small alcove found in many Japanese homes. The tokonoma usually contains a scroll painting, a religious or art object, and a flower arrangement (ikebana). Scroll paintings vary in size, and traditionally were often painted on silk. The subject matter of scroll paintings is diverse, but often contains images of plants, birds, figures, landscapes, and calligraphy.

For this workshop, we will focus on painting plants and animals of the garden, paying particular attention to seasonal variation. There are many things to notice in the Japanese garden that provide information on the season. Floral blooms, fall color, and new growth are some of the signs of change connected to the different temperatures and lighting conditions of the spring, summer, fall and winter. From the arrival of different bird species to the falling of cherry blossom petals, seasonal change is always visible in the Japanese garden.

V. Materials Needed

- Images of Japanese scroll paintings
- Rice paper (cut in pieces approx. 10" x 15")
- Bamboo pieces: 2 for each scroll (can also use wooden sticks, chopsticks, etc.)
- Paints
- Paintbrushes
- Water containers
- Yarn
- Scissors
- Plant cuttings (optional)

VI. Procedure

1. Lead your class in a discussion of Japanese scroll paintings.
 - a. Have you seen a scroll painting?
 - b. Can you describe what a scroll is?

Explain that traditionally, in many Japanese homes, scroll paintings were hung in a tokonoma, which is a display alcove for special objects and a flower arrangement. Tell your students that when they visit the Huntington, they can look for scroll paintings in the Japanese house in the Japanese garden.

2. Show your students examples of Japanese scroll paintings. Discuss the different elements in the paintings that they might see at the Japanese garden. Discuss the idea of seasonal scrolls, in which certain plants and animals are painted to represent different times of the year. Ask your class what kinds of clues from plants and nature tell us about the different seasons. (In the Japanese garden, different colors and blooms characterize seasonal changes. A traditional Japanese calendar assigns different plants to different months—see attached list.)
3. Ask your students to think about a plant or garden scene they'd like to paint that evokes a particular season. You may want to bring cuttings or photos of different plants for inspiration.
4. Distribute art materials and ask students to work on a painting using watercolors and rice paper.
5. When students are finish their paintings, they can wrap each end of the paper around a thin piece of bamboo (or other material) and use glue to stick the paper to itself.
6. Yarn can be tied to both ends of one bamboo piece for hanging.

VII. Discussion Questions

1. Can you describe what a scroll painting is?
2. How would you compare scroll paintings with other kinds of painting?
3. Why do you think scroll paintings often depict images of nature?
4. How can different seasons be represented in paintings?
5. Can you think of plants that you would paint to represent different seasons?

VIII. Making Connections

1. Are there any spaces in your house that you would compare with a tokonoma in a Japanese house?
2. Where would you hang a scroll painting in your house?
3. Can you describe changes in plants in your neighborhood that take place during the different seasons?

IX. Vocabulary

scroll painting

a painting made on paper or fabric that can be rolled up for transport or storage; in Japan, scroll paintings often contain imagery of landscapes, plants, animals, figures, and calligraphy

tokonoma

an alcove in a Japanese home that usually contains a hanging scroll, a religious or art object, and a flower arrangement called ikebana

X. Extension Activities

1. Ask students to research a plant from the Japanese floral calendar and to investigate both its seasonal habit and its symbolic connections in Japanese culture.
2. Search for seasonal changes in the plants at your school or in your neighborhood—document how a tree or plant changes throughout the year.
3. Make a collage using leaves, flowers, photographs, and text that describe a particular season.

 Japanese Floral Calendar 

January	Pine
February	Plum
March	Peach, Pear
April	Cherry
May	Azalea, Peony, Wisteria
June	Iris
July	Morning Glory
August	Lotus
September	'Seven Grasses of Autumn'—Japanese Clover, Pampas Grass, Arrow-root, Wild Carnation, Maiden Flower, Chinese Agrimony, Wild Morning Glory
October	Chrysanthemum
November	Maple
December	Camellia