



## SELF-GUIDED SCHOOL VISITS

Support your students' exploration of one of Sydney's most unique cultural and educational destinations.

The Chinese Garden of Friendship provides opportunities for students to engage with history, culture, geography and design through a living example of a traditional Chinese garden in the heart of Darling Harbour.

This resource has been developed to support self-guided school visits and contains background information, and curriculum-linked content to help students connect with the Garden before, during and after their visit.

For more information or to make a booking, contact the Chinese Garden front office on 02 9240 8888 or email [functions@property.nsw.gov.au](mailto:functions@property.nsw.gov.au).

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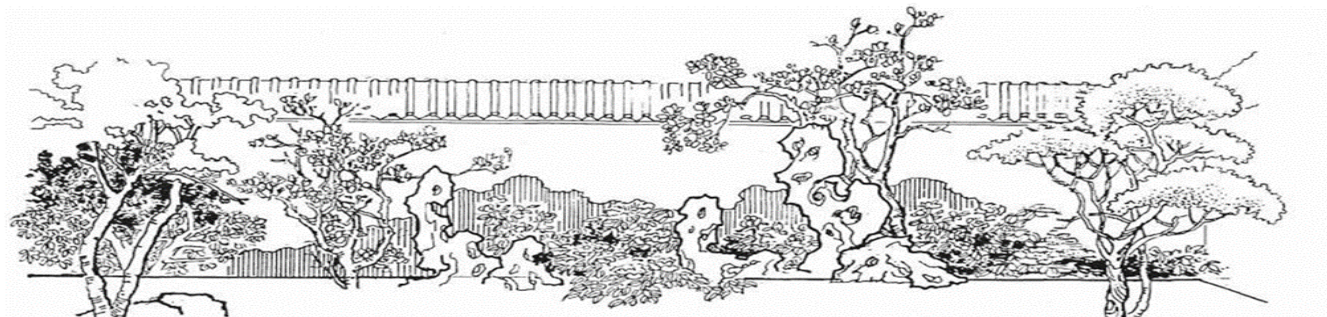
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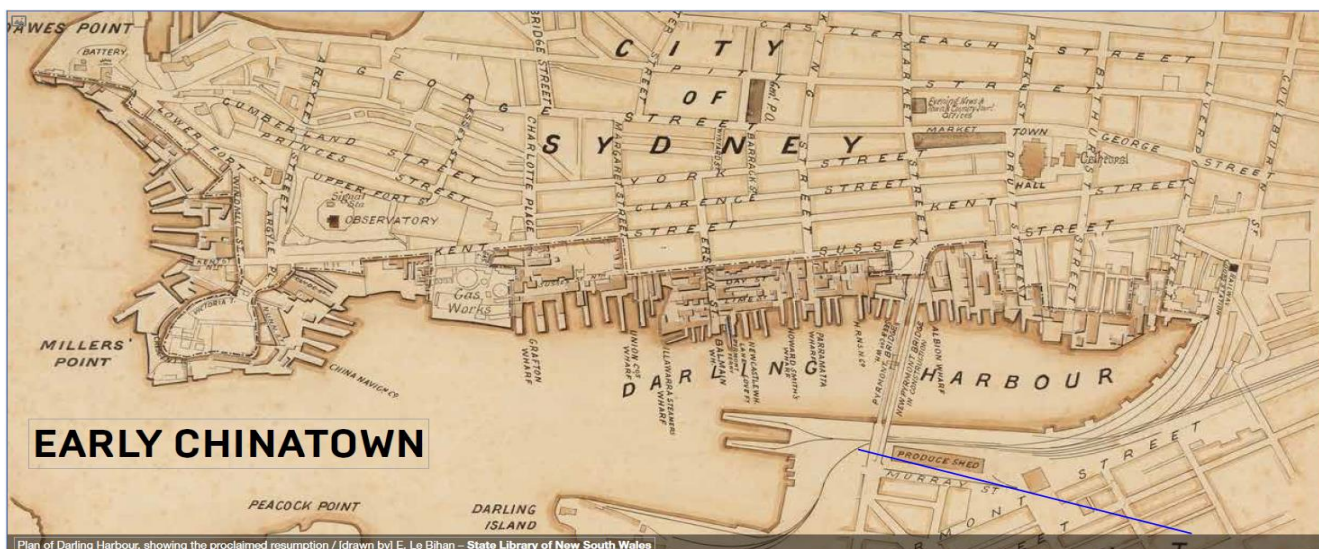
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Plan of Darling Harbour, showing the proclaimed resumption / [drawn by] E. Le Bihan - State Library of New South Wales

## THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN AUSTRALIA

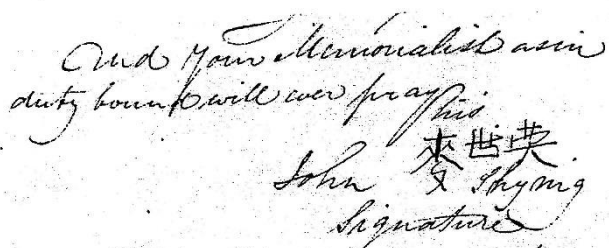
Over the past 200 years men and women of Chinese ethnicity have contributed to the rich social, cultural, and economic life of Australia, and in particular Sydney.

Today, Australians of Chinese descent are represented in all walks of life, and there is a myriad of Chinese-based organisations, community groups and networks of Chinese social services.

The stories of the Chinese migrants who have come to Australia over time are many and varied. The early colonial Chinese community consisted largely of ‘sojourners’—predominantly male migrants who came to Australia to work hard, save money, and then take it home to their families.

Later, anti-Chinese feeling, and harsh immigration laws made it difficult for the community to thrive and grow. However, in the late 20th century relaxed immigration regulations and a more tolerant social climate encouraged new Chinese migrants to move to Australia and today Chinese migrant numbers continue to increase.

Australia’s Chinese community has been most visible in Sydney, where its history is embedded in the social, cultural, and architectural fabric of the city. Today, this is reflected in the colourful and vibrant Chinatown as well as the Chinese Garden of Friendship.



Ref: Mak Sai Ying signing his name

## Trade connections

Possibly the first association between China and Australia was the trade in ‘trepanng’—marine animals also known as ‘sea cucumber’ or ‘bêche de mer’. There is evidence that trepanng fishing began in northern Australia before British colonisation, with Aboriginal communities of eastern Arnhem Land telling of a golden-skinned people called ‘Bajini’ (Makassans) who came regularly to the shores of northern Australia to harvest and process the marine animals; dating of archaeological sites in the area suggest that modern trepanng trading occurred from around 400 to 100 years ago.



Trepanng – Sea slugs

Makassans (from the port of Makassar on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi) worked on trepanng boats known as ‘prahus’, collecting and curing trepanng and selling them to Chinese traders in Timor. From there they were sold on to merchants in Batavia (modern-day Jakarta), destined eventually for Canton (Guangdong) province in China.

In the early 17th century, the British East India Company set up a lucrative trade link with China, importing tea to Britain.

The East India Company owned three of the convict transport ships in the First Fleet—the Scarborough, the Charlotte and the Lady Penrhyn. These vessels were under charter to pick up tea from Canton after unloading their outward-bound cargo of convicts in Sydney Cove, as were the Second Fleet’s Lady Juliana, Justinian and Surprise - were also chartered to pick up tea from Canton on the return journey.

## Early Chinese immigration

Since the inception of the colony several men—including Sir Joseph Banks—had suggested bringing in Indian or Chinese ‘coolies’ as indentured labourers. These workers were considered to be more diligent and obedient, and less threatening than convicts.

Prior to 1820, Chinese sailors began staying in Sydney. Some had arranged to be paid off there, while others probably jumped ship. By 1821, John Macarthur and his wife Elizabeth employed three Chinese people—a carpenter, a servant and a cook—at their farm in Parramatta.

With convict transportation to NSW ceasing in 1840, a major labour shortage soon followed, and plans were negotiated to bring in a Chinese indentured labour force.

In 1840, British determination to continue importing opium to China despite Chinese attempts to abolish the trade led to war. The resulting Treaty of Nanking in 1842 forced the Chinese Government to open up ports such as Amoy and Shanghai to foreign trade, and also ceded the island of Hong Kong to Britain. This enforced access resulted in increasingly well-organised shipments of indentured labourers, as well as free migrants, to Australia and the rest of the world.

On 2 October 1848 the first significant number of Chinese immigrants, consisting of 100 men and 21 boys from Amoy, arrived in Australia aboard the *Nimrod*. 64 of them were dropped off at Millers Point, Sydney and the rest went on to Moreton Bay (Brisbane) in Queensland.

By the end of 1849 there were no more than 300 Chinese people in the whole of Australia, yet it was reported in a newspaper at the time that “more than half of the furniture manufactured in Sydney is made by Chinamen”.

Between 1848 and 1851, 981 Chinese arrived in Sydney; the next year saw an increase in activity, with 1,604 men arriving between April 1851 and April 1852. Around this period several thousand Chinese indentured labourers were shipped into the colony, many of them by the merchant, entrepreneur, and later founder of Townsville Robert Towns, who introduced eight shiploads—approximately 2,500.



Chinese Hawker. Lithograph by Livingstone Hopkins, 1887. Published courtesy of the National Library of Australia.

## The effects of the Gold Rush on Chinese immigration

In May 1851, the discovery of gold in Bathurst in New South Wales was announced to the world. Shortly after, men from many nations walked away from their unsatisfactory or poorly paid jobs and headed for the goldfields.

By early 1852, news of gold was spreading to the villages around Canton and deeper into China. Chinese businessmen in Hong Kong were organising to move as many men as possible under a system of credit-tickets, with fares repayable when fortunes were made.



Sydney businessman Mee Quong Tart with Chinese delegation 1887

The leaving of China was an overwhelmingly male phenomenon; the justification was to accrue wealth during a temporary absence. The men would live abroad frugally, acquire what riches they could, endure the exile to the best of their ability and eventually return to China. This is why there was a significant lack of Chinese female immigrants in the mid-1800s.

When gold was discovered in Australia, the volume of Chinese immigration significantly increased. The highest number of arrivals in any one year was 12,396 in 1856. In 1861, 38,258 people, or 3.3 per cent of the Australian population, had been born in China; this number was not to be equalled until the late 1980s. The majority of Chinese migrants to Australia during the gold rush were indentured or contract labourers, and many also made the voyage under the credit-ticket system managed by brokers and emigration agents, with fares repayable once fortunes were made; only a small minority were able to pay for their passage up front and arrive in Australia free of debt. The Chinese migrants referred to the Australian gold fields as ‘Xin Jin Shan’, or the New Gold Mountain.

The Treaty of Nanking and the discovery of gold were two major influences in the increase of Chinese migrants to Australia in the mid-19th century.

Chinese miners in Australia were generally peaceful and industrious, but other miners distrusted their different customs and traditions, and their habits of opium smoking and gambling. Animosity, fuelled by resentment and wild rumours, led to riots against the Chinese miners.

The worst violence against Chinese miners occurred in central New South Wales. Six anti-Chinese riots occurred at the Lambing Flat camps over a period of 10 months, the most serious on 14 July 1861 when approximately 2,000 European diggers attacked Chinese miners.

Despite attempts to flee from the violent mob, about 250 Chinese miners were gravely injured and most lost all their belongings. After this tragic event, Lambing Flat was renamed Young.

In the 1890s there were about 36,000 Chinese-born people in Australia, mostly living in New South Wales and Victoria. After the gold rush many stayed in rural areas and took up farming, while others turned to new mining enterprises such as tin-mining on the border between Queensland and New South Wales, and in north-eastern Tasmania. Some Chinese settlers ran small businesses in towns and cities, and many turned to market gardening, relying on skills and knowledge built up over centuries in China.

Many Chinese men, having come to Australia to make enough money to support their impoverished families in China and then return home, found themselves isolated within Australian society by their limited knowledge of the English language and Western customs. Another factor contributing to their loneliness was that Chinese women were not allowed to migrate to Australia.

### Limiting Chinese immigration

The pressure of public opinion against the Chinese caused the New South Wales Government to pass the Chinese Immigration Restriction and Regulation Act in 1861 to restrict the numbers of Chinese in the colony. Queensland introduced restrictions in 1877, and Western Australia followed suit in 1886.

By the 1881 census there were 1,321 Chinese in Sydney, and although this number was very small, they were visible because of a tendency for the Chinese to congregate in just a few areas of the city, such as The Rocks. With increased public pressure the New South Wales Government passed the Influx of Chinese Restriction Bill, 1881, restricting entry to one Chinese person for every 100 tons of shipping and charging a 10 pound poll tax per migrant (increased in 1888 to 100 pounds per migrant).

As the 19th century drew to a close, anti-Chinese attitudes were translated into further legislation. Various British colonies, including New South Wales in 1898, adopted what became known as the Natal model—excluding unwanted migrants by making them sit a dictation test in an unfamiliar language.

In 1901 the newly formed Commonwealth Government based its Immigration Restriction Act (applied to all non-European immigrants and underpinning what became colloquially known as the 'White Australia Policy') on the dictation test model, while NSW also retained its 100-pound poll tax for several years. The act was largely successful in stopping the movement of Chinese people into the port of Sydney; meanwhile those Chinese already in Australia had to decide whether to stay or leave, and many of them left.

Under the Immigration Restriction Act, 1901 the *Certificate of Exemption from the Dictation Test* (CEDT), 1905 could be granted to residents considered to be of 'good character'—often merchants and traders—and also visitors such as students, tourists and residents' relatives. The act was administered erratically and gave enormous power to bureaucrats.

### Strengthening relationships with Asia

In the decades following the Second World War, the White Australia Policy increasingly came under question. A centrepiece of Australian foreign policy was the introduction of the Colombo Plan in 1951, aimed at strengthening relationships with Asia.

By 1970 Australia had donated AU\$300 million to the Colombo Plan. Assistance was given in the form of expertise, food and equipment, and the education of Asian students in Australia, many of whom were Chinese. By the 1980s more than 20,000 students had benefited from the plan, and although they had to leave Australia on the completion of their studies, many subsequently migrated to Australia.

In 1956 Australian federal law was changed to allow any Chinese person who had been resident in Australia for more than 15 years access to citizenship, and by 1965 the White Australia Policy had been dropped by both major political parties. From 1966 citizenship could be applied for after five years' residency (reduced to three years in 1973).

The Australian Government formally recognised China in 1972, and there followed both a rapid increase in the numbers of Chinese migrants, and increasing diversity in their social positions and places of origin.



## The Chinese in The Rocks

The Rocks district, next to the city wharves, had been the preferred location for Chinese businesses since the first large influx of Chinese migrants arrived in search of gold. By 1858, entries began to appear in the city's business directories with unnamed 'Chinamen' registered at several addresses in Cambridge Street, which ran alongside George Street.

In 1861 fewer than 200 of the around 13,000 Chinese people in NSW were recorded as living in Sydney, but many passed through, and the establishment of Chinese boarding houses and produce stores in The Rocks had made an impact on the cosmopolitan city.

The records of the Royal Commission of 1891 into Alleged Chinese Gambling and Immorality presents a snapshot of the distribution and activities of Chinese residents and tenants in The Rocks. For the first time, the Commission took evidence not only from Europeans but from many Chinese merchants, workers, and their families as well.

From the information gathered, it was estimated that there were 47 buildings in the George Street area with Chinese occupants. These 47 structures were comprised of:

- 22 gambling houses
- 13 general stores
- 2 chemists dispensing Chinese medicines
- 1 grocer
- 1 lodging house
- 1 furniture factory (attacked by rioters in 1878)
- 5 houses in Queen Street which had been demolished
- 1 furniture workshop in Globe Street
- 1 laundry on the corner of Gloucester Street.

These represent many of the likely occupations of early Chinese immigrants.

## Chinatown

Chinese names began to appear in the records around the mid-1860s, and when the fruit and vegetable markets moved from near Town Hall in George Street to the Belmore Markets (on the site of the present Capitol Theatre) in 1869, the area's Chinese population increased significantly.

The first Chinese lodging houses to the north and east of Haymarket were located in Goulburn Street and the alleyways near the Belmore Markets. Many of the buildings occupied by the Chinese were at the end of their habitable life and were proclaimed 'unfit for human habitation' in an 1876 report by the Sydney City and Suburban Sewage and Health Board.

When Sydney City Council opened a market building in Haymarket in 1909, fruit and vegetable markets, many of them owned and run by Chinese people, were attracted to move to the area.

It was not just traders who moved into the new Chinatown. Families came too, as many of their houses in Surry Hills had been demolished. The council carried out slum clearances and implemented traffic management plans for the first three decades of the 20th century.

As this process of remodelling the area progressed, many Chinese families moved into the Haymarket area and a little further west to nearby Ultimo. The new Chinatown was visually like earlier Chinatowns. It was located in one of the poorest areas of the city where small or marginal retail businesses or restaurants could be set up for low rents.

In the following decades, other buildings in the Dixon Street precinct were purchased by various clan associations, and by the time the City Council was resuming land for market extensions in 1929, it was often dealing with Chinese landowners.



## Chinatown today

In 1971 a Dixon Street Chinese Committee was set up by the city council and they contended that no one considered the narrow and tawdry Dixon Street to be Chinatown, and though there was support for improving it, they hoped a more extensive precinct could be created. In 1979 the city council decided to create a permanent pedestrian mall. Some of the Chinese businesses in the area donated money. Henry Tsang provided his services in an honorary capacity and Stanley Wong became Chairman of the project. Lord Mayor Nelson Meers opened the new Chinatown, complete with arches and all the accoutrements in 1980 amid great enthusiasm.

Today, Dixon Street is a popular venue for not only locals, but also, national and international visitors to Sydney. A wealth of restaurants and retail outlets offer their services and wares, and people of all nationalities and persuasions visit the area to experience a taste of China, ranging from traditional grocers selling vegetables and Chinese tableware, to stores retailing haute couture.

For many residents of Sydney, both Chinese and non-Chinese, Chinatown represents a link between the past and the future. It is both a reminder of the myriad stories of Australia's Chinese migrants, and a marker of the stories yet to be told by their descendants.

## CHINESE CULTURE AND THE ARTS

Many of the materials used in the Chinese Garden of Friendship, and the techniques used to produce them, have their roots in ancient Chinese tradition. Over the millennia they have become integral to Chinese garden design and are imbued with imagery and religious symbolism.

**Wood** is an important traditional building material in China. While many buildings were constructed from rock and brick, wood was preferred for its aesthetic qualities and availability, and it was usually used for the framework of buildings.

**Bamboo** is an extremely versatile and fast-growing type of grass which has about 480 different species. It is highly prized in Chinese culture, as it provides food, raw materials, shelter and medicine.

Bamboo is commonly used for chopsticks, musical instruments, furniture, flooring, scaffolding and many other everyday products.



When used as firewood, bamboo makes huge cracking and popping sounds due to the air trapped in each hollow stem segment. For this reason, it became part of a Chinese ritual in which it was used to scare away evil spirits, and it is believed that the idea for firecrackers emerged from this myth.

**Tea drinking** originated in China in the Shang dynasty (1766–1122 BC), originally for medicinal reasons; legend has it that tea was discovered when a leaf fell from a tea plant into just-boiled water that the emperor was about to drink. Chinese tea cultures include how to prepare it, what equipment is used to make and serve it, and when it is consumed.



Tea plays an important part in both casual and formal Chinese occasions. In addition to being drunk as a beverage, tea is used in traditional Chinese medicine, and is so important in Chinese culture that it is considered one of the 'seven necessities of daily life'—alongside firewood, rice, oil, salt, sauce, and vinegar.

**Clay** has long been used by skilful Chinese potters. They traditionally used the potter's wheel to make moulds for industrial-scale production of everyday ceramics such as vessels, bricks and tiles. They also produced pieces of great artistry such as the famous terracotta army of Shih Huang Ti, and glazed porcelain that became very popular in Europe.

**Calligraphy** is the art of fine writing. Chinese calligraphy is based on symbols, or characters, that each represent an object, word, or syllable. Altogether there are more than 50,000 Chinese characters, although a comprehensive modern dictionary will rarely list more than 20,000. An educated Chinese person will know about 8,000 characters, but only 2,000–3,000 are needed to be able to read a newspaper.



Knowledge of the characters and the ability to write them are highly prized in Chinese society, where calligraphy is considered, a refined art closely related to painting. Calligraphers use special brushes, ink, paper and 'ink stones'—stone mortars for grinding and containing ink—to craft their character-based artworks.

**Architecture** in China follows the principles of Feng Shui, a Chinese philosophical system for creating harmony in and with one's surroundings. Many traditional buildings have wooden frameworks with brightly tiled roofs, and wide, upswept eaves—often decorated with elaborate and intricate carvings—which provide both shade from the sun and protection from the rain.



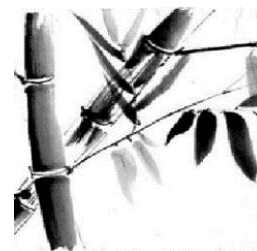
The Gurr - original drawing, Chinese Garden of Friendship

They are usually built facing south because evil spirits are believed to originate in the north. The colour red, believed to bring good luck, is used extensively. These buildings, originally built to hold religious objects, are tall towers with several levels, each with a roof jutting out over the level below.

The most spectacular building in the Chinese Garden of Friendship is the Gurr, which is in a prime position and can be seen from almost anywhere in the Garden.

**Traditional Chinese brush painting (Guohua)** has its own specific functions and customs. Paintings were not usually permanently displayed; they were kept in the form of scrolls or concertina books and were brought out to be admired on special occasions. Great emphasis was placed on the technical skill of the artist, but the works usually avoided the complexities of perspective and shading.

Many traditional landscape artworks presented an idealised version of nature, and often included the four elements essential in garden design—water, plants, rock, and buildings—plus an inscription or saying which reflected the mood of the painting.





## THE CHINESE GARDEN OF FRIENDSHIP DESIGN

The classical Chinese garden is a miniature version of an idealised landscape, symbolising harmony between humanity and nature. It is typically enclosed by walls and includes water features, rock works, trees, and flowers, plus pavilions and galleries connected by (often winding) paths which lead visitors past a succession of carefully landscaped scenes.

The earliest Chinese gardens on record were built during the Shang dynasty (1600–1046 BC). Having originally evolved to cater to royalty and other wealthy inhabitants of ancient China, by the end of the fifth century AD they had become popular with less elite members of Chinese society as peaceful havens for reflection and relaxation; however, the majority of China’s ancient Chinese gardens have subsequently been converted into public parks and gardens.

The Garden was initiated by the Chinese community of Sydney, the Chinese Garden of Friendship (CGOF) Guangzhou in the province of Guangdong. Guangzhou is Sydney’s sister city and Guangdong is a sister state to New South Wales.

The garden was designed by the Guangdong Landscape Bureau in Guangzhou in China, and incorporates items manufactured in or salvaged from China, as well as elements sourced in NSW. The gardens were formally opened as part of Australia’s Bicentennial Celebrations on 17 January 1988.

The Garden in Sydney, like every classical Chinese garden, is governed by the interrelated Chinese Taoist philosophical principles of Yin Yang and Wu Xing, both of which stress the importance of Qi, the universal life force or vital energy. Yin and Yang are fundamental, opposing yet complementary forces. Literally translating as shady side and sunny side (of a hill), Yin is characterised as passive and calming and Yang as active and assertive.

The traditional Chinese garden designer works on the Taoist principle of Yin and Yang, the balancing of opposites.

The designer aims to achieve the seemingly impossible by:

- incorporating rocks which appear to defy gravity
- creating small spaces that seem large
- making large spaces feel more intimate

This can be seen in the garden through:

- the rush and noise of the waterfall as it flows into a quiet and peaceful lake
- strong jagged rocks protruding from the smooth, soft lake
- vertical bamboo stems that stand next to flat, rounded rocks and paving
- areas of shade contrasted by areas of brilliant sunlight.

Wu Xing, based on five phases, or elements—wood, fire, earth, metal, and water— is used to explain and describe interactions and relationships between all living forces. This is reflected in Chinese garden designers use of Chinese art of Shanshui Hua or ‘landscape painting of mountains and water’. The aim is to capture all the elements contained within the natural landscape— mountains, rivers, lakes, trees, valleys and hills—thereby endeavouring to recreate nature in miniature. This allows the visitor to experience a controlled combination of natural elements within a confined urban setting.



While the design of European and Australian gardens is mostly based on structural elements inherent in vegetation, Chinese gardens incorporate four major elements:

**Water**, In Taoism, represents intelligence and wisdom, flexibility and softness, relentlessness, and strength through weakness. Also known as shui, it is physically the central element of a Chinese garden, in the form of a lake or pond which usually contains lotus flowers and koi carp. Water should be visible from almost every point in the garden, in the form of lakes, streams or waterfalls, and tends to be alive with plant growth and richly coloured green algae

In the Chinese Garden of Friendship there is both still and flowing water, with several bridges and viewing points from which it is possible to see koi carp and turtles. A stream flows from the waterfall on the mountain and runs around the perimeter, feeding the Lake of Brightness and flowing gently into the smaller Lotus Pond.

**Rock** represents the bones of the earth, with the mountains forming the skeleton. Rockeries, a distinguishing characteristic of Chinese gardens, symbolise the active creative forces of the universe, while the mountain peak, often created on an island in the middle of the garden's central lake and therefore central to the garden, symbolises virtue, stability, and endurance. The ancient Chinese greatly appreciated rocks that were complex and convoluted, penetrated by open holes, structured like bones, and veined on the surface; in their gardens, the best rocks were highlighted and positioned to display their qualities, just as garden sculptures might be.

In the Chinese Garden of Friendship there are rocks made of various minerals such as limestone, granite and sandstone. Some contain fossils, while others represent people, stories, animals and mythical creatures, including the phoenix, unicorn, dragon and tortoise.



Original drawing. Chinese Garden of friendship



Twin Pavilion. Chinese Garden of friendship

**Vegetation** has symbolic significance in Chinese culture, and there are more than 80 different varieties growing in Sydney's Chinese Garden. These include pine and cypress trees, which symbolise strength and moral virtue; bamboo, which represents human flexibility, perseverance and rebirth; willow trees, which are associated with gentleness and beauty; and peach trees, which represent immortality.

Many Chinese gardens have an area dedicated to miniature trees, known as penjing. In Australia they are often referred to by the Japanese term, bonsai, but there are some essential differences between the two: bonsai consists of formal, clipped and controlled individual trees, whereas the word penjing literally translates to 'potted landscape'. It is characterised by a natural landscape feel, often incorporating rocks and water to create a scene; and even where only trees are involved, penjing often looks distinctly different from bonsai. Designs often appear bolder, livelier and sometimes even bizarre, and whereas the bonsai base is usually plain and nondescript, penjing will often be on a tray or very ornate pot. As the Chinese garden is a miniature world, the penjing is a microcosm within a microcosm.

**Buildings** symbolise permanence and mark the presence of humankind. There is a balance of large and small, open, and secluded, complex, and simple buildings in the Chinese Garden of Friendship. They offer shelter from the weather, and places for contemplation and solitude. They provide viewpoints of the Garden framed by windows, but they are also intended to be viewed in conjunction with the other three elements. The architecture is based on traditional designs, with the woodwork painted red to bring good luck and roof tiles glazed in green to keep away evil spirits. Many buildings do not have solid walls, but carved wooden panels or movable screens, allowing them to be easily adapted to changing weather conditions.

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