China Garden Philosophy & Elements
A Brief Sampling of Thousands of Years of Chinese Tradition
“Chinese gardens are cosmic diagrams, revealing a profound and ancient view of the world and of man’s place in it.” Maggie Keswick

Architecture
- Structures harmonize with and enhance nature
- Pavilions, walls, curved bridges, covered walkways, and mosaic pathways lead one through a succession of hidden delights
- Offers places for contemplation, viewing, writing, and conversation

Water
- Water evokes images of rivers and oceans
- Reflects and enhances its surroundings
- Offers a stillness of energy and reflection
- Symbolizes intelligence and wisdom
- Water is Yin (female) and complements rocks

Plants
- Willow signifies ability to bend and not break
- Pine is a symbol of longevity
- Peony represents virtue & beauty (symbol of spring)
- Lotus rises from the muddy depths to bloom; a sign of purity
- Plum is unafraid of adversity (symbol of winter)

Rocks
- Rocks can be pitted and intricate and are a source for contemplation
- Evoke mountain ranges and towering peaks in nature
- Become “sculptures” or focal points
- Rocks are Yang (male) and symbolize stability and permanence

Philosophy
- 天人合一 = “nature and humankind become one”
- The Garden is a microcosm of the larger world of nature
- Harmonious arrangement of elements rich in symbolic meaning
- Captures the sensation of wandering through a landscape painting
- Though man-made, appears as part of nature

Poetry
- Poetry in the form of couplets and Chinese characters abound in the Garden
- Brings out deeper meanings of the elements in the China Garden
- Enhances one’s emotional connection to the views
- Provides for contemplation of nature and life