

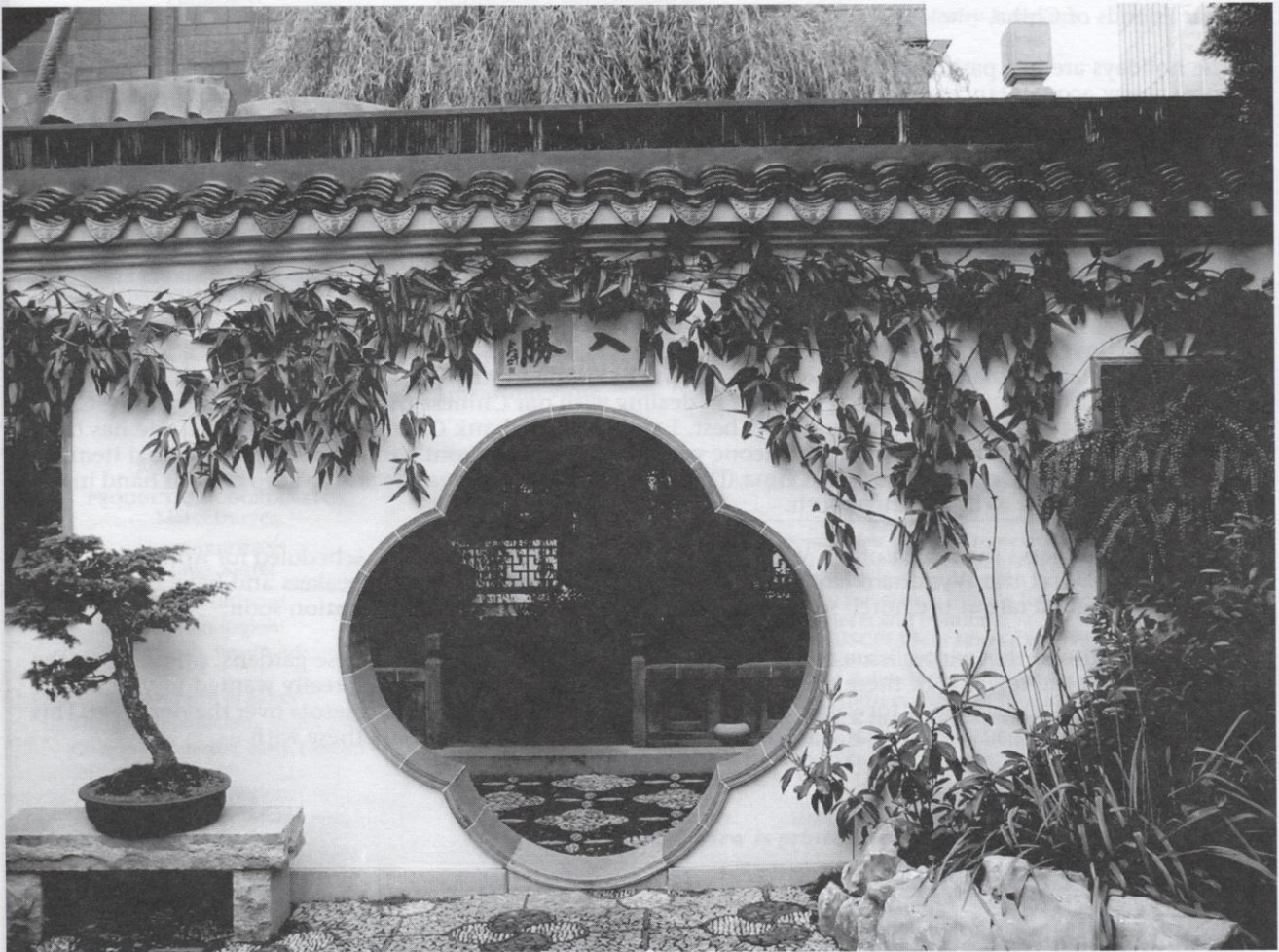
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Chinese Gardens in the USA



- CHINESE GARDENS • WOMEN IN CHINA •
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China Friendship Gardens in Minnesota

by Linda Mealey-Lohmann

They were walking to their cars after a rather long and energizing monthly board meeting of the Minnesota Chapter of the US-China Peoples Friendship Association (USCPFA-MN) one cool autumn Minnesota evening in October 2000. Suddenly, long-time board member C.C. Hsiao turned to fellow board member Linda Mealey-Lohmann and said incredulously, "Did you know there are five Japanese gardens in Minnesota and not one public Chinese garden here?" "Really?!" exclaimed Linda, "Maybe we should build one!" Thus, the seed of an idea to build a China Friendship Garden in Minnesota was planted.

Linda and C.C. then formed the USCPFA-MN China Garden committee. As co-chairs of the committee, Linda and C.C., along with several devoted committee members, have worked for five years researching China gardens, traveling to China to photograph northern-style gardens, interviewing people who successfully operate Chinese gardens, and meeting with potential partners and supporters.

The Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society

The USCPFA-MN China Garden Committee was recently incorporated into The Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society, a non-profit organization, which has nine Founding Directors; Walter Graff, Barbara Harrison, C.C. Hsiao, Jenny Hsiao, Joyce Hsiao, C.J. Liu, Linda Mealey-Lohmann, Mary Warpeha, and Yang Wang. The goal of the Garden Society is to build China Friendship Gardens in Minnesota. The first project is the Minnesota China Friendship Garden of Northern Brightness - Bei Ming Yuan. This will be a world-class garden that will be the first Northern-style Chinese Garden in North America. This garden will be a symbol of Minnesota's long-standing friendship with China, will

promote Minnesota's understanding of China and of China's rich cultural heritage, will serve as recognition of the contributions of the Chinese American community to Minnesota, and will further promote the friendship between the peoples of Minnesota and China. The Garden Society is also entertaining proposals for two smaller gardens as well. The Garden Society currently is negotiating for land on which to locate China Friendship Gardens in the Twin Cities (St. Paul/Minneapolis) metro area.

The Minnesota China Friendship Garden of Northern Brightness

Bei Ming Yuan, the Minnesota China Friendship Garden of Northern Brightness, came to life during the summer of 2005 when the Garden Society received its first glimpse at the design plans that were created by Mr. Ma Liangwei, the Deputy Director and Senior City Planner of the Beijing Municipal Institute of City Planning and Design.

Members of USCPFA-MN first met Mr. Ma when he traveled to Minnesota in 2002 for a short training program on Public Administration through the University of Minnesota China Center. Mary Warpeha, USCPFA-MN's current president, was the English teacher for the training program. The friendship between USCPFA-MN and Mr. Ma began to grow. In May 2004, Mr. Ma again traveled to Minnesota with a twenty-person delegation from Beijing. C.C. and Joyce Hsiao hosted a USCPFA-MN reception in their home for Mr. Ma and his delegation, during which Linda and Mr. Ma had a lively discussion about the China Garden project. Linda, Joyce, and C.C. stayed in touch with Mr. Ma after he left Minnesota and returned to Beijing. That friendship has blossomed into a treasured partnership. Linda was fortunate to have dinner with Mr. Ma and his staff, along with Mr. Wang Jian of the Beijing People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (BPAFFC), during her trip to Beijing in July this past summer (see photo on p.14). Linda also was treated to a tour of the beautiful new Beijing Youxie compound, which notably was designed by the Architecture Department of Mr. Ma's Institute in 1999.

As a result of this growing friend-



The Chinese character "yuan" is a classical way to write "garden" in Chinese, a character suggested by USCPFA-MN board member C.J. Liu for our logo. The calligraphy was done by USCPFA-MN board member C.C. Hsiao.

ship, Mr. Ma and his extremely talented architect staff, Mr. Qin Ming, the Chief Architect and Ms. Dong Weihua, a Building and Landscape Architect, have created a Northern-style China garden design for USCPFA-MN that is exciting and inspiring (see photos on pp. 12-13). The Chinese name for this garden, Bei Ming Yuan, was created by C.C. The character "Bei" represents the dual meaning of "northern" and "Beijing." The character "Ming" represents the dual meaning of "brightness" and "Minnesota." The logo for the Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society is the character "yuan" (illustrated above), which is a classical term evoking the image of a garden or gathering of civil persons and was researched by long-time USCPFA-MN board member C.J. Liu. C.C. Hsiao's beautiful brush calligraphy brings the "yuan" character to life.

Bei Ming Yuan will be a large complex of architectural structures, rocks, vegetation, and water. The grounds, which may encompass up to six acres, will include two courtyards, a teahouse, a gift shop, an exhibition hall, several traditional pavilions, a fan-shaped pavilion, several painted walkways, and an arch bridge. The main architectural structure will be a reception hall that will hold at least 200 seated guests and can be used for catered events, such as delegation receptions and life celebrations like weddings, birthdays, and anniversaries. The Garden will also be used for educational activities, cultural events, recreational activities, and business events and seminars.

Unlike other China gardens in the United States and Canada, Bei Ming Yuan will feature northern-style architecture, rather than the southern or Suzhou style of architecture with which most people are familiar. Northern-style architecture features a more subtle roof line, in contrast to the sweeping eaves of the Suzhou

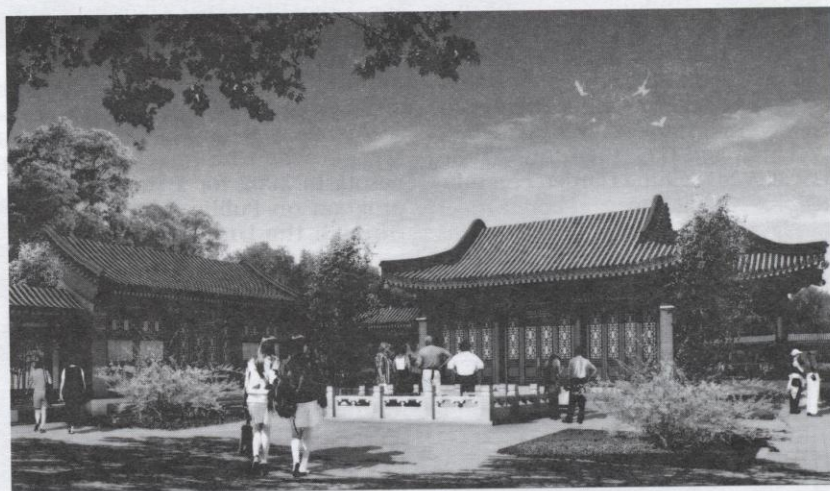
style. The buildings also are more colorful, using reds and greens, rather than the browns of the southern style. Naturally, the type of vegetation will also differ because it must be suitable for the colder northern climate.

Other China Gardens

In conducting the research for the Minnesota China Friendship Gardens, Linda has learned that there are several very important Chinese gardens in North America. These include (1) the Portland Garden of Awakening Orchids, which is a Suzhou style garden built in 2000 (www.portlandchinesegarden.org), (2) the Grigg Nanjing Friendship Chinese Garden at the St. Louis Missouri Botanical Gardens, which was built in 1986 with a Nanjing partner (www.mobot.org), (3) the New York Chinese Scholar's Garden at Staten Island Botanical Garden, which was built in 1999 with a Suzhou partner (www.sibg.org), (4) the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden in Vancouver, which is a Ming dynasty style garden, built in 1986 (www.vancouverchinese-garden.com), and (5) the Chinese Dream Lake Garden at the Montreal Botanical Garden, which is a southern Yangtze River Ming dynasty style garden built in 1991 (www2.ville.montreal.qc.ca/jardin/en/chine/societe.htm). In addition, there are three Chinese gardens in the development or construction phase; (1) the Xi Hua Yuan Seattle Chinese Garden at the South Seattle Community College, which is a Sichuan style garden that began initial construction in 1999 (www.seattle-chinese-garden.org) ; (2) a 12-acre Chinese garden at the Huntington Botanical Gardens in Pasadena, California (www.huntington.org); and (3) a 12-acre Classical Chinese garden at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. Linda has had extensive conversations with the Directors for several of these gardens, but is extremely grateful for the abundant and insightful advice received from Gloria Lee, Executive Director of the Portland Garden of Awakening Orchids.

The Next Step

What began as a seed of an idea is finally beginning to sprout. The Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society is in the process of negotiating



a site for Bei Ming Yuan. It is currently considering a site that has many positive attributes, including a central location that can be easily accessed in the Twin Cities, making it suitable for student and senior citizen fieldtrips, as well as a wide variety of cultural, community and business events. The Garden Society is making plans to move forward to the fundraising phase once the land is secured.

As part of Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty's Mission to China in November 2005, Mary Warpeha will be conducting further research on China's northern architectural style. She will be traveling with an architect to study and photograph examples of northern-style architecture and

gardens while in Beijing. Linda also will be traveling with the Governor's trade mission to promote the China Garden project and to garner support among the Chinese, as well as Minnesota entities.

USCPFA-MN and the Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society look forward to the day it can welcome all of USCPFA's membership to Bei Ming Yuan to enjoy the refinement of China's northern-style architecture and the northern beauty of Minnesota.

If you are interested in learning more about this project, please contact USCPFA-MN at uscdfa_mn@hotmail.com and view the website at www.uscpcfamn.org.

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Opposite page, top: Bird's-eye view of the proposed Minnesota China Friendship Garden by Beijing Municipal Institute of City Planning and Design. Opposite, below: Proposed building structures with northern-style architecture, for the Friendship Garden.

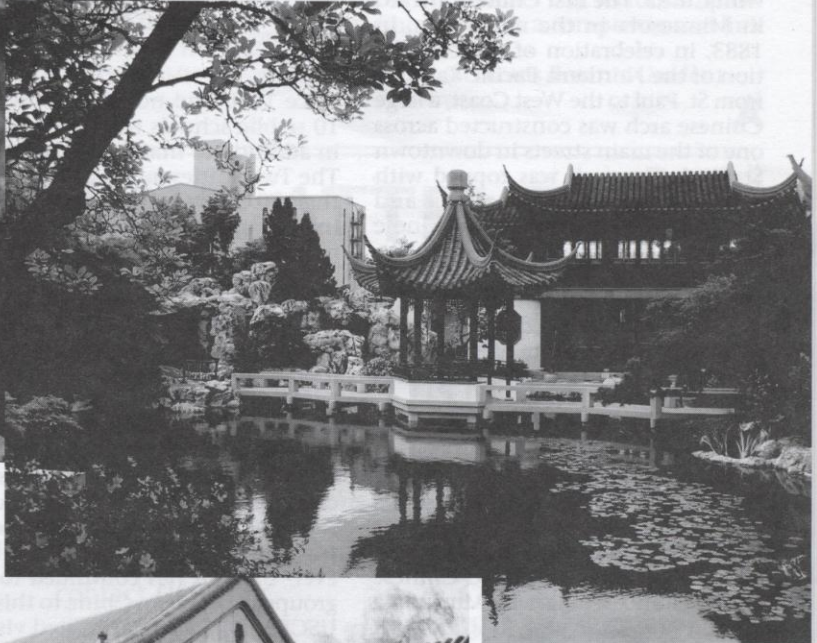
This page, left: Prince Gong's Garden in Beijing (northern-style architecture), photo by Linda Mealey-Lohmann.

Below: Portland Chinese Garden of Awakening Orchids (see also the photo on the cover).

Bottom: Reception hall at Madame Soong Ching Ling's garden in Beijing (northern-style architecture).



Prince Gong's Garden - Beijing



Soong Ching Ling Garden