

Visit us on:  
[www.japanesegardens.jp](http://www.japanesegardens.jp)



## Ryōan-ji

### 龍安寺

Today it seems unbelievable that the probably most famous rock garden, the garden of Ryōan-ji, was not always this famous. It actually started to become famous overseas after 1930 when it was mentioned as a Zen garden in a book about Japanese Gardens in the US for the first time. Until 1930, the garden was not even mentioned in guidebooks for Japan or Kyoto. Later, the garden became even more famous through a movie by Ozu Yasujiro.

Although Japanese researchers knew that Ryōan-ji was a temple of the Zen Buddhist Rinzai sect, they never put the garden in connection with expressing the essence of Zen and it has not been called a Zen garden. Almost all Japanese authors who mentioned Ryōan-ji as a Zen temple in publications had a strong relation to foreign countries and probably read publications on Japanese Gardens in the English language, which mentioned the rock garden of Ryōan-ji as a Zen garden.



It might have been to Shigemori Mirei, who had a deep interest in rock gardens and published several books about Japanese Gardens, that Zen gardens rose again in popularity among the Japanese population.

In Ryōan-ji's case, it was the spirituality of this special garden which finally made it famous. Before the rock garden's popularity rose in the 20th century, there was no priest caring for it on a regular basis, children played among the rocks and weed growing on the gravel bed.

Ryōan-ji translates to "*Temple of the Peaceful Dragon*" and has "*Daiunzan*" as Mountain name (大雲山).

龍安寺 is another possible writing.

Neglected rock garden with tile-roof wall and weed all over the place.