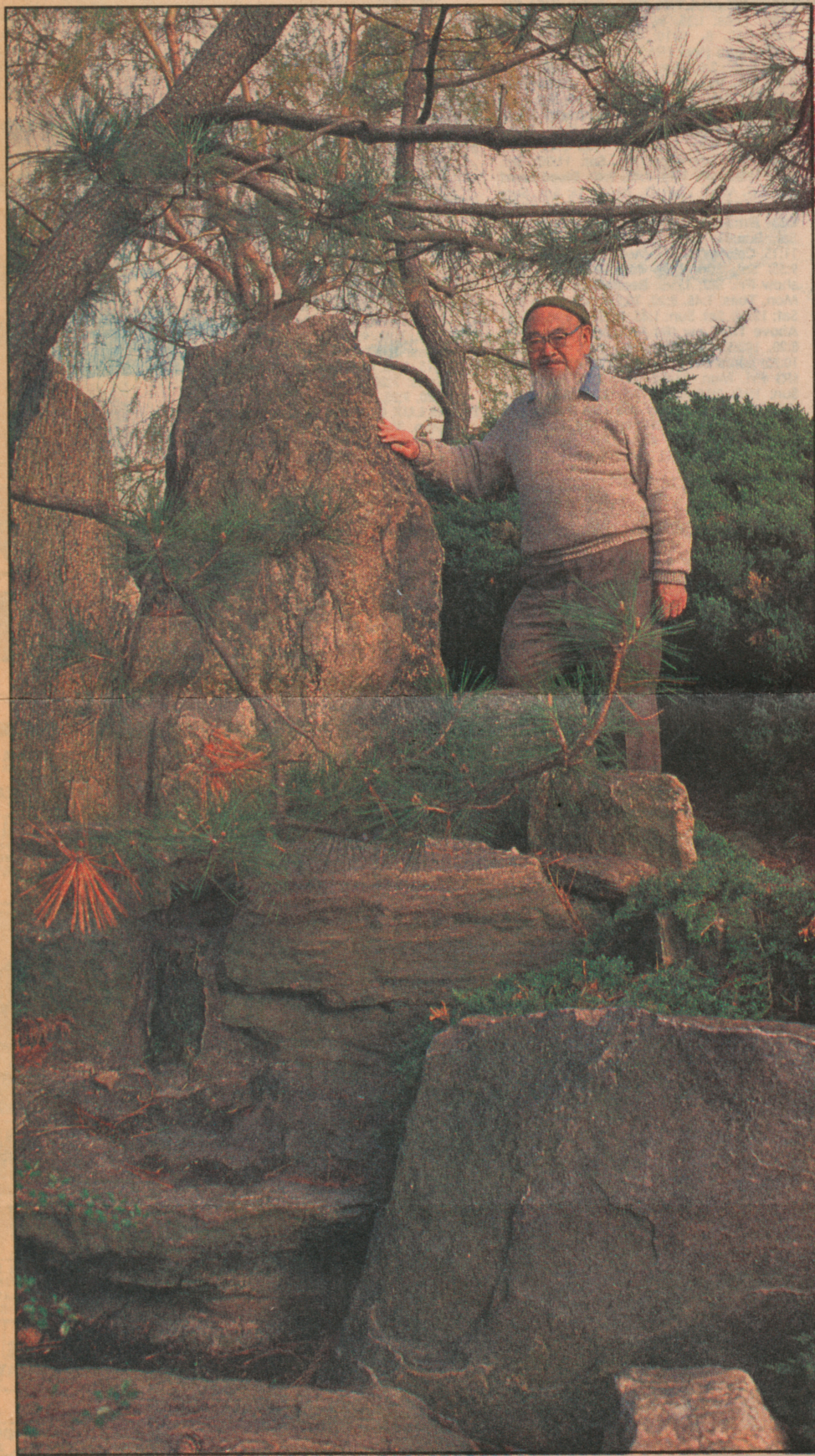


Gannett Westchester Newspapers/Friday, May 13, 1988

KANEJI DOMOTO ARCHITECT

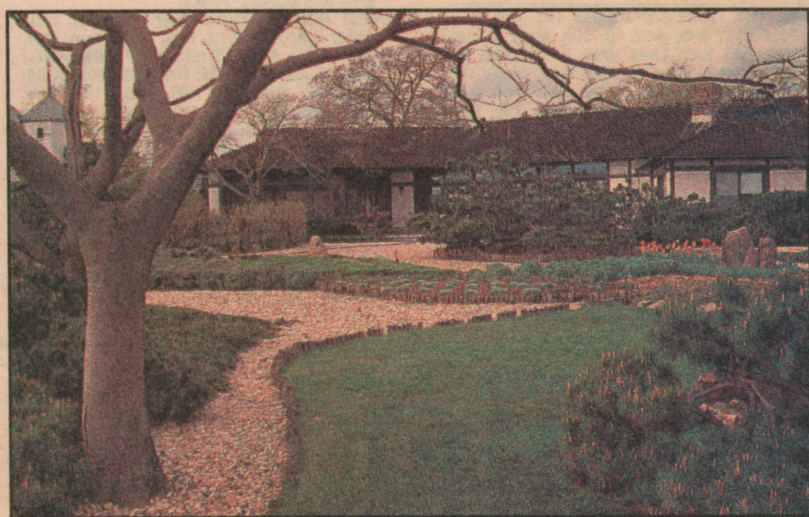
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Landscape artist strives for **HARMONY**



Gannett/Robert F. Rodriguez

Landscape artist Kaneji Domoto shows off one of his works — a backyard garden on Long Island Sound reminiscent of a Japanese Bonsai garden.



Gannett/Robert F. Rodriguez

Seven Westchester gardens will be included in a tour Saturday. Proceeds from the event will be used to lobby for passage of a bill to compensate American-Japanese citizens interned during World War II.

Architect uses his talents for WW II internment victims

By Barbara Woller
Staff Writer

Kaneji Domoto creates harmony.

He combines rocks, trees, flowers, pools and waterfalls to make Japanese gardens, many that grace Westchester homes.

There was a time, though, when there was neither harmony nor grace in Domoto's life.

That was during World War II, when he and his family were forced to live behind barbed wire with limited sanitation and no privacy in a Japanese-American internment camp. Like other Japanese in America, Domoto and his family were seen as security threats after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor.

They could each take only one suitcase of personal possessions to the camp.

Their home and land were left behind.

Domoto, a building and landscape architect, will channel

his knowledge of the serene order of Japanese gardens and the traumatic disorder of the internment camps into a benefit tour tomorrow of seven of his Japanese gardens in lower Westchester.

Proceeds will benefit the New York chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League, a civil rights group working for passage of legislation aimed to redress suffering of former camp inmates.

The legislation would give an apology and a tax-free \$20,000 to each of the estimated 60,000 former camp inmates who are still living, about half the number originally interned.

Domoto, who spent 18 months in a camp, says the apology and money are justifiable. If the bill is approved by President Reagan, Domoto plans to give some money to his family and some to charity.

"This is a precedent," says Domoto, 75. "It's to show the government, if you do this you might be liable for this much money. In this country, money seems to carry a lot of weight on decisions."

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Take a tour of Japanese gardens

Seven Westchester gardens designed by Kaneji Domoto can be toured tomorrow from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Rain date is Sunday.

Visitors may start the tour at any garden; tax-deductible tickets, at \$25 per person for the entire tour, will be sold at all the sites. Maps will also be available.

Domoto also designed some homes on the tour, but only the gardens will be open. For more information, call tour chairwoman Sarah Sogi of Elmsford, 592-9374.

Here are the gardens on the tour:

1 ■ Dr. Sol Cohen,
Kenilworth Road, Harrison: A waterfall in a swimming pool and large junipers highlight this garden.

2 ■ Royal Durst, 71 Griffen Ave., Scarsdale: A natural spring feeds a lake filled with goldfish, and there is an abstract-shaped swimming pool in the lake. The garden includes bonsai; a giant, weeping hemlock; and a teahouse.

3 ■ Mark Lynton, 961 Fenimore Road, Mamaroneck: Huge natural stones are featured here, as is a bamboo grove and a hillside of azaleas. This house also was designed by Domoto.

4 ■ Harold Lynton, 971 Fenimore Road, Mamaroneck: Here, too, Domoto designed the house and garden. Part of the house projects over a natural stream. A wood deck around the swimming pool is at the same level as the living room floor.

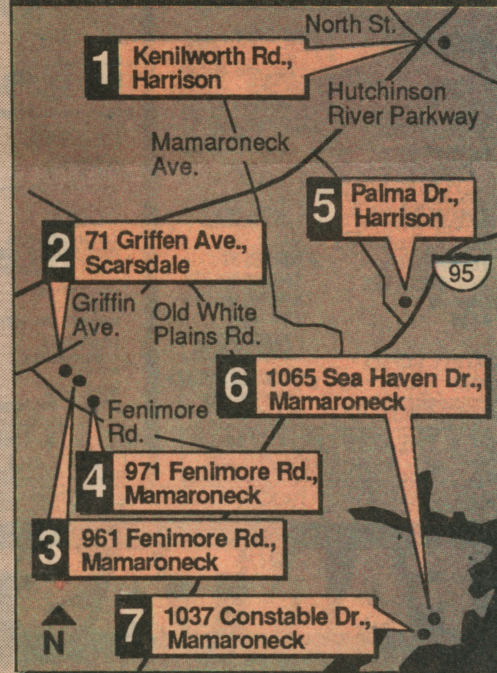
5 ■ Dr. Larry Paredes, Palma Drive, Harrison: The swimming pool in this garden has two waterfalls. One faces east to catch the morning sun; the other, west, to reflect the sun when it sets.

6 ■ Kenneth Wellner, 1065 Sea Haven Drive, Mamaroneck: Another Domoto house and garden; both face Long Island Sound. Large pebbles and stones with islands of greenery are used instead of a lawn. There also is a bamboo grove.

7 ■ Philip Straus, 1037 Constable Drive, Mamaroneck: This garden is known for its mugho pines, one of which has a spread of more than 35 feet. Pebbles with islands of greenery replace a lawn.

— Barbara Woller

Gardens tour



Gannett/Ray Mellen

GARDENS/

From page F1

Dr. Sol Cohen of Harrison says he is opening his garden for the tour "out of respect for Kan Domoto." "I also feel that the Japanese-Americans were done a great injustice during the Second World War."

'We'd not do it today'

Domoto discusses the war years from his New Rochelle home, which is filled with three drafting tables and piles upon piles of folders.

It is miles and years away from that time in 1941 when Domoto learned of the bombing while working in a peony field in his brother's nursery near Oakland, Calif.

"We said it could not be so," says Domoto. "We were very skeptical."

He says that while his experience in a Colorado camp was awful, it was less traumatic than fates suffered by others, who were separated from their families.

He says Japanese-Americans — he much prefers "American-Japanese" — would never accept the camps today.

"We were ordered by the Army to vacate and we just did it," he says. "We'd not do it today. We're better organized, educated. We've learned you have to stand for your American citizenship. The generation that went to those camps so docilely didn't tell its children about it. My youngest daughter learned about it when she went to college. We never talked about it at home. It was a terrible thing. We wanted to forget about it. That's a terrible attitude to take."

His internment interrupted a life Domoto assumed would be filled with uninterrupted opportunity.

His father was a nurseryman, and Domoto, the youngest of eight children and one of two sons, helped out with the family business at any early age.

He says this was superior education for his work today in dealing with nurserymen to create harmony — a cherry tree here, an azalea bush there...

"When nurserymen hear of a landscape architect, they think of a college graduate who is a little wet behind the ears and not knowing too much about green things," he says with a laugh. "They think it's all book learning. I could talk with nurserymen on their own terms. It's like being able to talk to farmers."

But at the time he did not see working with plants as a career.

Change of mind

He was a top student in his majors of physics and mathematics at Stanford University. When the Depression intervened, Domoto left school to again work for the family business.

His life took a new direction after he read a magazine article about the legendary architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

"It intrigued me," Domoto says. "But I was a nurseryman, which is like a farmer. I said I had to go back to school to take up architecture."

He went to the University of California at Berkeley, but again his studies were interrupted. Nurserymen from Japan came to see his

father's business, and Domoto left school to work with them in San Francisco and then at the World's Fair in New York in 1939.

Soon after, Wright accepted Domoto as an apprentice. They worked together for about eight months.

Then came Pearl Harbor — and the internment camp.

After the war, Domoto traveled around the country looking for work, which was an education in itself. He says his nationality drew questions from prospective employers.

"I could not say 'Japanese.' I said 'Oriental.'"

He also found it distressing that, when he talked about the internment camps, few other than Jews and Quakers knew of them.

"They'd say 'Yes. We understand. We know about it,'" he says. "Other groups didn't know what was happening."

He also was slapped by prejudice during these years because of his skin, which had tanned while he was in the camp. After crossing the Mason-Dixon line on a train ride south, a conductor asked about his nationality.

"If I said 'black,' I'd have had to go to the back," says Domoto. "There were very few Orientals around. There was a question. I stayed."

Putting down new roots

Domoto and his family eventually settled in New Rochelle in the mid-1940s.

He soon returned to working with Wright, this time designing some of the houses in Wright's Usonia Homes project in Pleasantville.

In these years, he also developed his own business, building houses and offices and landscaping gardens.

Among his many projects are the Seal Island exhibit at Mystic Marinelife Aquarium in Mystic, Conn., and the Penguin Rookery at the New York Aquarium in Brooklyn.

Six gardens designed by Domoto are pictured in "Japanese Gardens," a Time-Life Book published in 1979.

Gardens, and the rock formations in them, are his special love — he calls the rocks his "passion." When landscaping with plants, it takes a lot of work to maintain appearance and proportion, but not with stone.

"It's there with sunshine or no sunshine," he says. "On snow it looks great. You don't have to water it."

Domoto loves the granite in Westchester for its strength and dramatic sharp edges. Also, because it becomes "alive" when it gets wet; water highlights its color and accents its sparkle.

"I've always had a deeply religious feeling with these stones," he says. "If you constantly arrange them well, you say 'that Man up there' helped. Human beings are not that perfect. You feel someone is with you when you place these things and they fit — when they're in harmony."