

Representation of Gardens in Japanese Woodblock Prints during the Edo period.

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Pictures of gardens could be found in Japanese woodblock prints of different genres from *bijin-ga* and erotic prints to kabuki scenes and landscapes. While literal descriptions and gardening manuals are recognized as sources on the garden history, there has been little discussion about the representation of the gardens in *ukiyo-e* prints in spite of many examples of thoroughly depicted surroundings that can be found among them. So, this study attempts to show that *ukiyo-e* prints could provide miscellaneous information on gardens and their perception during the Edo period. Considering an amount of material a few criteria for selecting prints were established. This study focuses on prints where a garden is depicted as part of the surrounding environment, correlates with the represented building, and is clearly viewed from outside or inside the mansion. The analysis of the prints of such artists as Chōbunsai Eishi (1756-1829), Katsukawa Shuncho (1723-1793) Torii Kiyonaga (1752-1815), and Kitagawa Utamaro (1754-1805) confirms that *ukiyo-e* could enrich our knowledge about the garden types, layouts, plants, as well as pastimes favoured by townspeople during the Edo period. More than that, the garden elements could be read as a visual comment to the subject itself. For example, a coloration and selection of the plants could signify the month of the year, while geomantic and Buddhist symbolism associated with gardening design could reveal some hidden meaning through the stone-and-water arrangements pictured in the print.