



# Normandale Japanese Garden: Celebrating a Dream

*Dave Kenney*

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## **Normandale Japanese Garden: Celebrating a Dream** Dave Kenney

After winning the top prize of \$500 in a national competition, the Bloomington Affiliated Garden Clubs initiated a project in 1967 to beautify the then-developing city of Bloomington by creating a Japanese garden on the site of Normandale Community College. Today that space has become the serene and lovely Normandale Japanese Garden. Here Dave Kenney tells its story, which is one of tireless determination, creative daring, community involvement, technical expertise, artistic vision ... and a lot of hard work. Forty years ago the landscape where the garden now stands was a sodden marsh. But the presence of water was just what the garden's founders were looking for, and a chance reference brought an eminent Japanese landscape architect, Takao Watanabe, into the project. Local contractors, truck drivers, engineering firms, and other businesses chipped in generously, and the labor and insights of the Bloomington Garden Club provided the continuing impetus behind the garden's development.

The story of both the garden's challenges--from harsh winter weather and pesky turtles to flooding and vandalism--and its enduring successes, which are plainly to be seen today, are related here admirably; the garden's quiet grandeur and contemplative beauty can also be felt in the book's lengthy visitor's guide and in numerous photos, both modern and historic, that accompany the text.

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