SEH gives $1M for Japanese garden

It will be built near cherry trees on Clark College site

By ANDREA DAMEWOOD
Columbia staff writer

A $1 million donation from SEH America will soon bring a taste of the East to the city north of the Columbia River.

Thanks to an agreement between SEH, the city of Vancouver and Clark College, Southeast Washington's first Japanese garden will be built on the Clark College campus.

To be located by the existing cherry trees near the southwest entrance to campus, the garden will feature meandering paths, a gathering area, a bamboo grove and many features unique to Zen-inspired Japanese gardens.

"It's a big deal," Vancouver Mayor Royce Pollard said.

"When was the last time someone gave the city $1 million just because they liked the city?" Work should begin next summer and be finished in time for a dedication under the flowering cherry trees in April 2011, parks manager Jane Tesker Kleiner said.

The City Council will vote to formalize the park agreement tonight.

Both the mayor and SEH executives called the garden symbolic of the relationship formed between the city and the Japanese corporation, one of the city's largest private employers.

"We say thank you very much to Vancouver and this community," SEH Executive Vice President Tatsuo Ito said Friday. "We are getting a lot of support from the city... this is our appreciation for the community."

SEH America sends many of its employees for nine months to Japan to train, Ito said, and building a Japanese garden is "an important and important thing for us."
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SEH America sends many of its employees for nine months to Japan to train, Ito said, and building a Japanese garden is symbolic of the relationship formed between the city and the Japanese corporation, one of the city's largest private employers.

Both the mayor and SEH executives called the garden a long-term commitment that could add as many as 1,000 jobs.

"We are very pleased to announce the donation of a Japanese garden to Clark College," said Clark College President Kevin Brown. "This is a wonderful opportunity for our students and the community, and we are grateful to SEH America for their generosity."