



### Lisa Christy

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
PORTLAND JAPANESE GARDEN

Lisa Christy is a specialist in understanding audiences and how best to communicate with them. Christy, who ascended to the role of Executive Director of Portland Japanese Garden in 2024, previously served as the Chief External Affairs Office at Portland Japanese Garden, overseeing Membership, Marketing, Communications, and Community Relations. Christy came to the Garden in 2014 as Director of Marketing and Communications at an auspicious time in its history: the organization was about to embark on an historic expansion led by world-renowned architect, Kengo Kuma.

During her tenure at the Garden, Lisa Christy grew the department seven times over, oversaw a comprehensive rebranding for the Garden, and directed the Garden's expansion communications plan that yielded national & international press. She has expanded the organization's community access programs for underserved populations, established a comprehensive digital strategy, and has driven record-setting admission for the Garden year over year – even during construction.

Prior to working for Portland Japanese Garden, Christy worked at premiere advertising agency Wieden + Kennedy for nine years where she helped guide award winning advertising campaigns such as Old Spice's "The Man Your Man Could Smell Like" and Proctor & Gamble's "Thank you, Mom" Olympic campaign, in addition to Starbucks, Sony, and Travel Oregon. Christy also worked at OLSON advertising agency in Minneapolis, MN and Bernstein-Rein in Kansas City, MO.

As the daughter of professors in education and advertising, Christy believes passionately in giving back to the industry through education. In addition to her agency work, she was a full-time instructor at the University of Tennessee where she was awarded Lecturer of the Year. She has also consulted and guest lectured on marketing, communications, and media strategy for universities and professional groups throughout the United States. Christy holds a bachelor's degree in communications from Middle Tennessee State University and a master's degree in advertising from Michigan State University. She currently lives in Portland with her husband and son who loves baseball.



### Akihito Nakanishi

DIRECTOR OF JAPAN INSTITUTE  
ARLENE SCHNITZER CURATOR OF CULTURE, ART,  
AND EDUCATION

Akihito (Aki) Nakanishi is an international cultural leader and public diplomacy expert with over 25 years of experience in government relations, public communication, cultural programming, and artistic exchange, conceptualizing and executing a myriad of impactful programs for global audiences. He serves as Director of Japan Institute and the Arlene Schnitzer Curator of Culture, Art, and Education for Portland Japanese Garden.

For 10 years, Nakanishi served as the Cultural Affairs Specialist at the United States Embassy, Tokyo, where he oversaw a wide spectrum of embassy involvement in cultural, creative, and educational activities designed to enhance mutual understanding between the United States and Japan. In addition to being the principal advisor to the Mission's Cultural Attaché, he also served as a cultural advisor to Ambassadors with the responsibility of directly overseeing some of the Ambassadors' cultural and education projects such as *"Ties Over Time"* (under Amb. John V. Roos) and *"International Poetry Exchange Project"* (under Amb. Caroline B. Kennedy).

Prior to working for the Embassy, Nakanishi worked for three years as Program Director at one of the major media corporations in Tokyo, followed by a role as Exhibition Director for four years at a family-owned museum. Drawing upon this extensive knowledge of the arts, he has worked as an independent art director, producing exhibitions and art fairs (*Art Photo Tokyo 2016-17*), co-producing literary events and festivals (*Tokyo International Literary Festival, 2012-18*), writing dossiers for arts events in specialty publications and newspapers, all while running his own non-profit organization for regional revitalization and youth empowerment, *echovisions*.

For his work at the Embassy, Nakanishi has received multiple State Department Awards including the State Department Meritorious Honor Award (May 2010), U.S. Embassy Japan Eagle Award (October 2011), and the U.S. Mission Japan Honor Award (October 2016).

He holds a master's degree in cultural policy from the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (Japan) and is currently a PhD Candidate in the field of cultural anthropology and history at University of Cambridge (UK).



### Hugo Torii

GARDEN CURATOR  
DIRECTOR OF JAPANESE GARDEN TRAINING CENTER

Hugo Torii is the Garden Curator at Portland Japanese Garden, making him the 10th to take on this critical role since the Garden opened in 1967. As Garden Curator, Torii helps to keep Portland Japanese Garden true to its original intent and design, while also allowing it to grow and evolve. Torii oversees a team of gardeners and is actively involved in the process of all Garden maintenance, keeping in mind the short term needs as well as longer term implications.

Prior to becoming the Garden Curator, Torii spent more than 2 years as the Director of Grounds Maintenance, overseeing the physical aspects of Portland Japanese Garden, its maintenance, and development. In this role, he started several projects that he continues in his current role as the Garden Curator, including building a training structure for the gardening team and starting an exchange program with gardeners from other notable gardens, to continue to position Portland Japanese Garden as a leader and key resource in preserving the art of Japanese gardening.

With a master's degree in Landscape Design from the Kyoto University of Art and Design, Torii brings a background of studies and experience in both Japanese gardens, Japanese aesthetics in horticulture, and floristry. Prior to his roles at Portland Japanese Garden, Torii spent over three years at Peter Berg Landscape Design in Rheinland Pfalz, Germany, and 12 years at the prominent UEYAKATO LANDSCAPE Co. Ltd., as a gardener and landscape architect in Kyoto, Japan. During this time, Torii managed projects including the Japanese garden and greeneries for the nearly 60-acre Keihanna Commemorative Park, the strolling pond garden at the Yosui-en Garden, and annual maintenance of pine trees at Nijo Castle, a World Heritage Site listed by UNESCO.



### Misako Ito

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF JAPAN OFFICE  
REPRESENTATIVE DIRECTOR OF JAPAN  
ASSOCIATION OF PORTLAND JAPANESE GARDEN  
AND JAPAN INSTITUTE

Misako Ito is the Executive Director of Portland Japanese Garden and Japan Institute's Japan Office in Tokyo. The first person to hold this newly established role, Ito's rich experience of launching grassroots, community-based exchange programs and establishing networks of intellectual exchanges and international relations have made her a widely respected leader in cultural diplomacy. As Executive Director, Ito is responsible for establishing a networking framework that will maintain, strengthen, and add connections between Portland Japanese Garden and Japan Institute with organizations and individuals in Japan. She also supports Japan Institute's three programmatic centers: the International Exchange Forum, International Japanese Garden Training Center, and Global Center for Culture & Art.

Born and raised in Tokyo, Ito studied abroad at the Australian National University in Canberra and graduating from Tsuda University in Tokyo with BA (American Studies), she worked at an American investment bank. She joined Toshi Shuppan, Publishers, where she started her professional career as an editor of 17 years. In 1988 she was involved in launching Gaiko Forum, a monthly journal on Japan's foreign policy and foreign affairs. Ito served as Editor-in-Chief for the journal beginning in 1999.

In 2004, Ito became the first managing director of the Japan Foundation Information Center (JFIC) at the Japan Foundation, Tokyo Headquarters. She has since held several positions at the Japan Foundation and the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including the posts of Director of JICC (Japan Information and Culture Center) at the Embassy of Japan in Washington, D.C., Director of the Japan Foundation Los Angeles, Director of JCC (Japan Creative Centre) at the Embassy of Japan in Singapore. She returned to Japan in 2016 to be assigned as Secretary General for the U.S.-Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchanges (CULCON) at the Japan Foundation in Tokyo. In May of 2023, Ito assumed her director role with Portland Japanese Garden and Japan Institute. She works out of the organizations' office, located in the International House of Japan in Tokyo.



### Sadafumi Uchiyama

CURATOR EMERITUS

Sadafumi (Sada) Uchiyama is Curator Emeritus of Portland Japanese Garden. Before his retirement, Uchiyama served as Chief Curator from 2021 to 2023. Uchiyama had served as Garden Curator of Portland Japanese Garden from 2008 to 2021, during which time he helped to create and integrate the Cultural Crossing Expansion Project. Uchiyama also served as a member on the Garden's Board of Trustees from 2003 to 2007. He was also Director of Japan Institute's International Japanese Garden Training Center.

A fourth-generation Japanese gardener from southern Japan, Uchiyama is devoted to fostering relations between Japanese gardens in Japan and those outside of Japan. He has been involved in the development of the North American Japanese Garden Association (NAJGA) and serves as a Charter Member of its board and programming board.

In 2022, Uchiyama was awarded the Foreign Minister's Commendation from Foreign Ministry of Japan, one of the highest honors bestowed by the Japanese government, given to those with outstanding achievements in international fields. In 2022 he was also honored by the Oregon Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects, which hailed him as "an internationally recognized master artisan of the practice of landscape architecture."

Uchiyama has taught landscape design courses and lectured on Japanese gardening at colleges and public gardens throughout the United States and Japan. His writings have been featured in *Garden Design*, *Fine Gardening*, *Inspired House*, *Luxe Magazine*, as well as professional journals in Japan.

He is a registered landscape architect with a BLA and MLA from the University of Illinois. His representative projects include renovations of the Osaka Garden; the site of the 1893 Great Columbian Exposition at Jackson Park in Chicago (from 2000 until present); and the *Shofu-en* of the Denver Botanic Gardens (2001 – 2012). Most recently, he completed the *Shoun-Kei* Japanese garden at Sarah Duke Gardens at Duke University (2015). At Portland Japanese Garden, Uchiyama worked closely with Kengo Kuma to create and integrate new garden spaces into the Cultural Crossing expansion. The two have continued to work together, collaborating on the new Rolex Headquarters in Dallas, Texas and other projects in the US.



## Diane Durston

CURATOR EMERITA

Diane Durston is a writer, lecturer, cultural consultant, and educator, who lived for 18 years in Japan. From 2007 to 2018, Durston was the Arlene Schnitzer Curator of Culture, Art & Education at Portland Japanese Garden, where she has been instrumental in expanding the Garden's reputation as a center of cultural learning, laying the groundwork for the Garden's new International Institute for Garden Arts and Culture. Upon her retirement in 2018, Durston assumed the role of Curator Emerita.

She is the author of three books and numerous essays and articles on the culture and traditional way of life in Kyoto. Her book *Old Kyoto* is now in a second edition and 15th printing. The New York Times has referred to it as a "Japan travel classic." Her other books include *Kyoto: Seven Paths to the Heart of the City*, an introduction to historic preservation districts in Kyoto. She has also contributed essays to the *Encyclopedia of Japan*, *Japan*, *The Cycle of Life*, and *the Japan Crafts Sourcebook*. Her most recent book, *Wabi Sabi: The Art of Everyday Life* was published in 2006.

As a cultural consultant, she has developed on-site cultural programs in Japan introducing Japanese art, culture, religion, history, and gardens for such organizations as the University of Pennsylvania, the Whitney Museum, the Yale Galleries, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Since returning to the US in 1996, Durston has served as Special Programs Producer for the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, where she produced month-long performing arts festivals in conjunction with the openings of two special exhibitions "Edo: Art in Japan 1615–1868" in 1998 and of "Golden Age of Archeology in China" in 1999. From 2002–2006, Durston was Director of Special Projects and later Curator of Education at the Portland Art Museum.

In 2022 it was announced that the Government of Japan has awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays to Durston. This award was established in 1875 by Emperor Meiji and is among the highest honors conferred to civilians. The Consular Office of Japan in Portland shared that Durston was chosen to be among the recipients of the Japanese government's 2022 Autumn Commendations "in recognition of her contributions to the introduction of Japanese culture in the United States, and to the promotion of mutual understanding between Japan and the United States."