

# Where Heaven Meets the Mountain

## Chase Garden, Orting, Washington

BY STEVE LORTON

*Great art, it is said, can be described but not defined.* And therein lies the magic. For when we experience the work of great artists, we step into a world we can feel, that makes us grow intellectually and spiritually... but we don't know exactly why.

Two visionary artists, Ione and Emmot Chase, created a garden in Orting, Washington, over a four-decade period starting in the 1960s. Captivated by the design of Edo-period Japan, the Chases built a small home and then surrounded it

with a garden. In their creation, they did not copy the Far East aesthetic they loved so much, but instead assimilated it into their Northwest environment. In the 1990s, the garden was left to the Garden Conservancy, a national organization dedicated to saving and sharing outstanding American gardens for the education and inspiration of the public.

The Chases presaged the native-plant movement by decades. Because they spent summers in British Columbia, the garden needed to be self-sustaining during the dry summer months. Perched atop a bluff, looking out over the Puyallup River Valley and straight on to Mount Rainier, the garden is surrounded by second-growth native forest. The Chases carefully chose plants that complement the natural features of the landscape and neither compete with, nor are lost to, the magnificence of their surroundings. Drifts of low-growing plants creep out of gravel and sweep around large, impeccably sited rocks. Japanese maples stretch up and out over mounds of shrubbery. Clumps of bulbs, rhododendrons and azaleas color the backdrop of assorted greens with pastel. And the boughs of both artfully pruned conifers and native evergreens, left to grow naturally, flutter and rustle in the wind. River boulders, some weighing up to three tons, hand-picked from local river valleys, are impeccably arranged on the slope.

Walk the paths that meander through more than four acres. Listen to the water, the whispers of foliage, the chirps of birds. Take in the beauty of the horticulture. It is, in a word, ethereal.

Then suddenly you'll look up, and there, gleaming before you, is the mountain as you've never seen it.

Orting, Washington, near Graham, is about one hour south of Seattle and just a short drive from Tacoma. Chase Garden is open to the public through June 30, 2017, and is located at 16015 264th St. East in Orting. For more information, days, hours and admission fees, visit [chasegarden.org](http://chasegarden.org).

