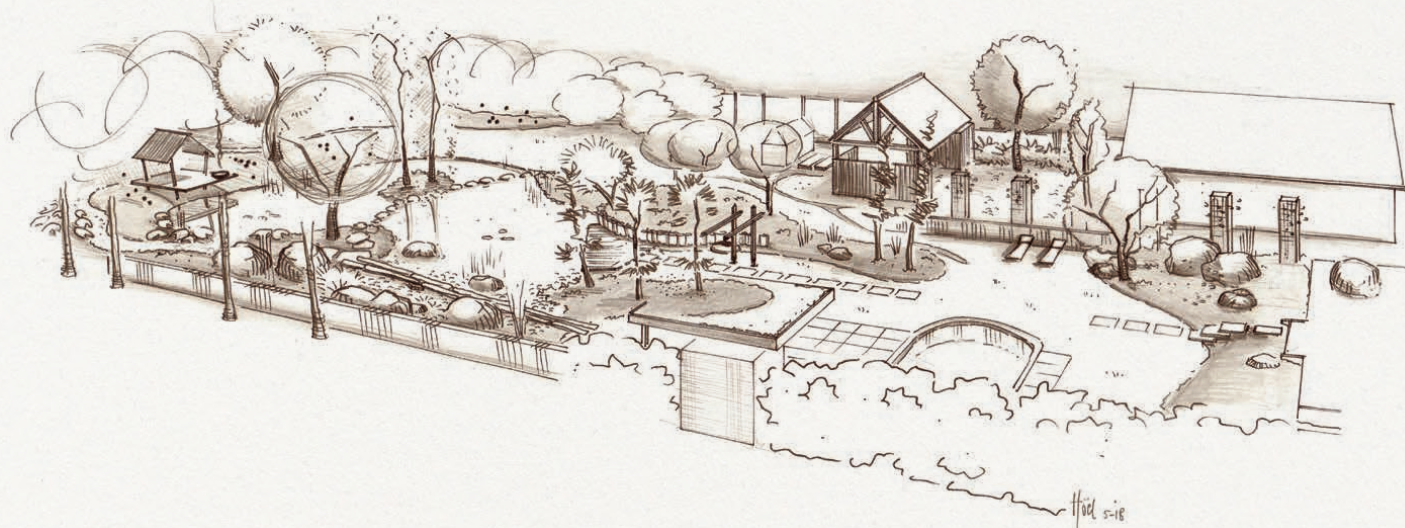
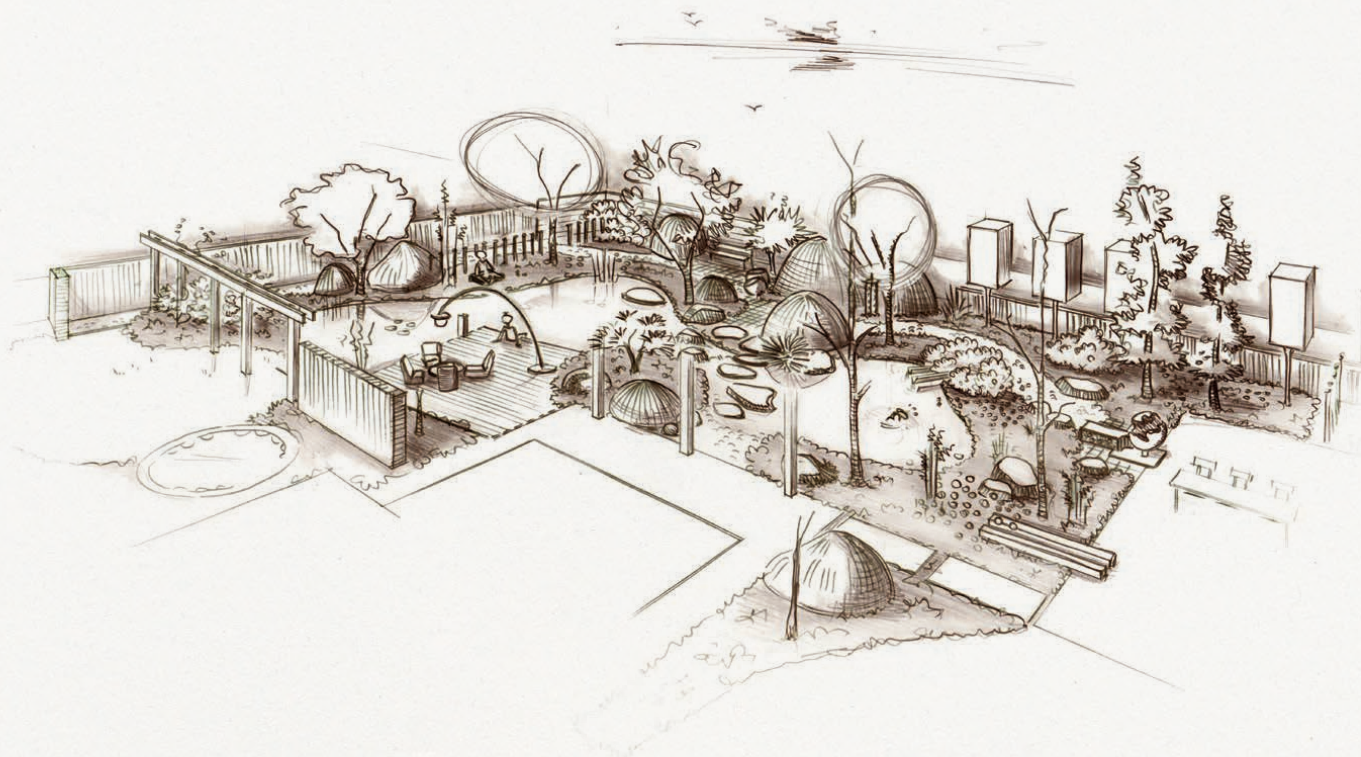


# JAPANDI OUTDOOR LIVING

LAILA RIETBERGEN

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# Preface

I would like to start by thanking you for having my third Japandi book (I really have to pinch myself writing this) in front of you and for your interest in reading and learning about this wonderful aesthetic. In both of my first two books, *Japandi Living – Japanese tradition. Scandinavian design.* and *Japandi – Serene homes & Thoughtful living*, the focus is on interiors. In this book, I would love to delve into the world of Japandi outdoor living.

When I started writing my first book in 2021, Japandi wasn't as well known as it is now in 2025 – today you see it popping up everywhere. For me, Japandi isn't a trend of natural colours and organic shapes. It's inseparably linked to Japanese and Scandinavian philosophies, to craftsmanship, items that last, natural materials, showing ageing and working with – instead of against – nature. These are all more important to me than the colours you use. Just like in my previous two books, here, too I will share my take on Japandi and highlight some of its most important elements to me.

It probably comes as no surprise that nature and natural materials are essential in Japandi. In Japanese and Scandinavian cultures, spending time outside is important. Of course, going forest bathing (*shinrin-yoku*) or getting a breath of fresh air on the beach is lovely. But what about your own piece of nature, your own garden, courtyard or (small) balcony? This is the space you see and can enjoy every day. In this book, I'd like to invite you to explore different Japandi outdoor spaces so you can learn about what's important and collect lots of practical tips regardless of the size of your outdoor space.

Maybe you've been lovingly integrating Japandi for many years, or perhaps this is your first encounter with this design aesthetic. Either way, I hope my book and thoughts inspire you and help you make your home and outside space into somewhere you can recharge, have fun and connect with everyone in it.

Love, Laila



# About the author

***'I have never tried that before, so I think I can definitely do it.'***

*Pippi Långstrump (created by the Swedish author Astrid Lindgren)*

I really like this quote as I think it perfectly sums up my journey and personality. I studied sports marketing at the Johan Cruyff Institute in the Netherlands – and I still love sports – but I was also one of those girls who was always changing her bedroom. I inherited this love for interiors from my mother and when I decided it was time to start my own business, I really wanted it to revolve around interior design.

In October 2020 I started my account, @japandi.interior, on Instagram – a perfect way for me to inspire people around the globe with my take on the Japandi philosophy. In 2021 I started writing my first book and I'm so happy to share that over 12,000 copies of that book have been sold already. Partly thanks to my books, I discovered that I like to create (tangible) products as well. So in 2024 I launched a lime paint collection with over 35 colours in collaboration with Betonlook – and I'm working on some new products already. I'm so glad that I have found my *ikigai* and am looking forward to all those 'Pippi moments' that the future holds.

My personal interior style wasn't always as Japandi as it is today, but – being the chaotic person I am – I've always been drawn to a more tranquil home environment to bring me the calm and serenity my busy brain needs. I've also always loved bringing the outside in, with natural materials and (lots of) plants. Together with my boyfriend Wouter, son Tygo and cat Kiyomi, I live in the Netherlands. Here, we have created our own version of Japandi in our new home and I'm happy to say it meets all of our needs. We're looking forward to growing together and of course changing things in the house to keep it fun and safe for Tygo.

I hope my book and thoughts inspire you to find your take on Japandi and maybe even dare to create your own Pippi moments.







# About this book

In this book, I invite you to explore the art of outdoor minimalism and discover how to create your own outdoor sanctuary – one that feels like a natural extension of your indoor space. For me it's not about following strict rules, but about embracing the feeling it brings: calm, connection and simplicity.

If you've read one of my previous books on Japandi interior design or follow me on Instagram, you probably already know that, to me, Japandi is more than just a design style. It's a way of living or mindset. A quiet return to the essence of things. Deeply connected to nature in many ways, Japandi is rooted in simplicity. It invites us to live with intention, to find beauty in the understated, to accept perfect imperfections and to create spaces that breathe.

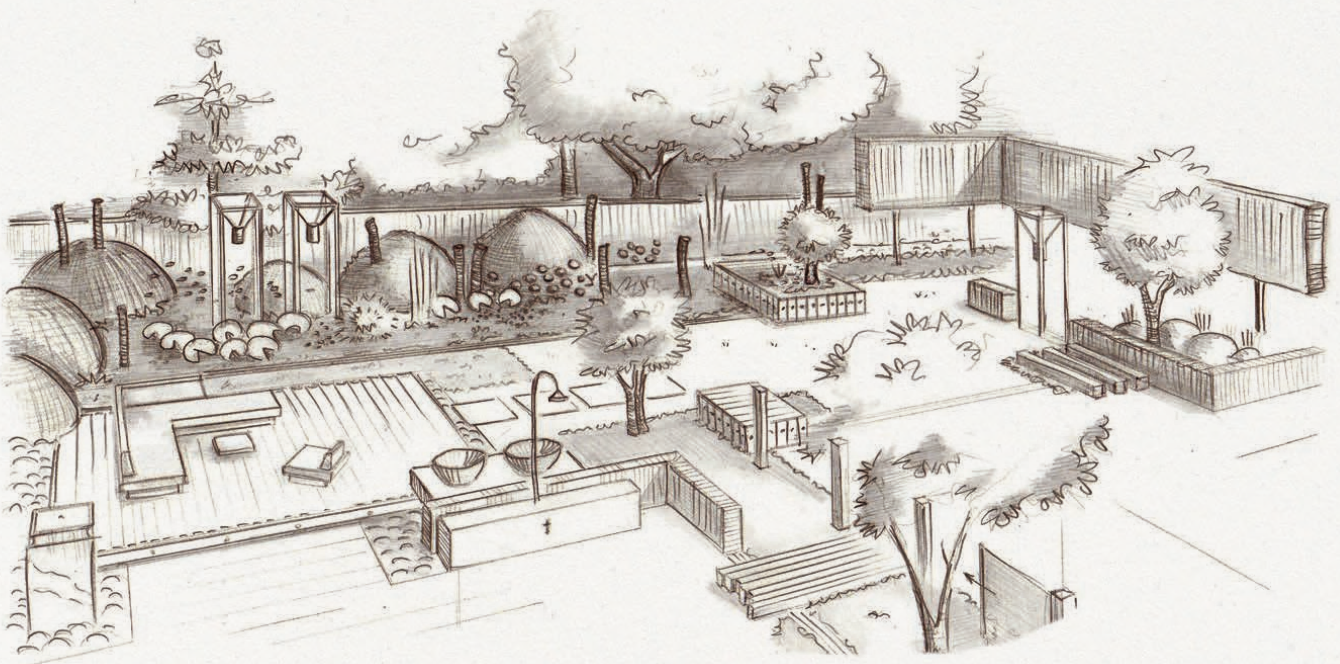
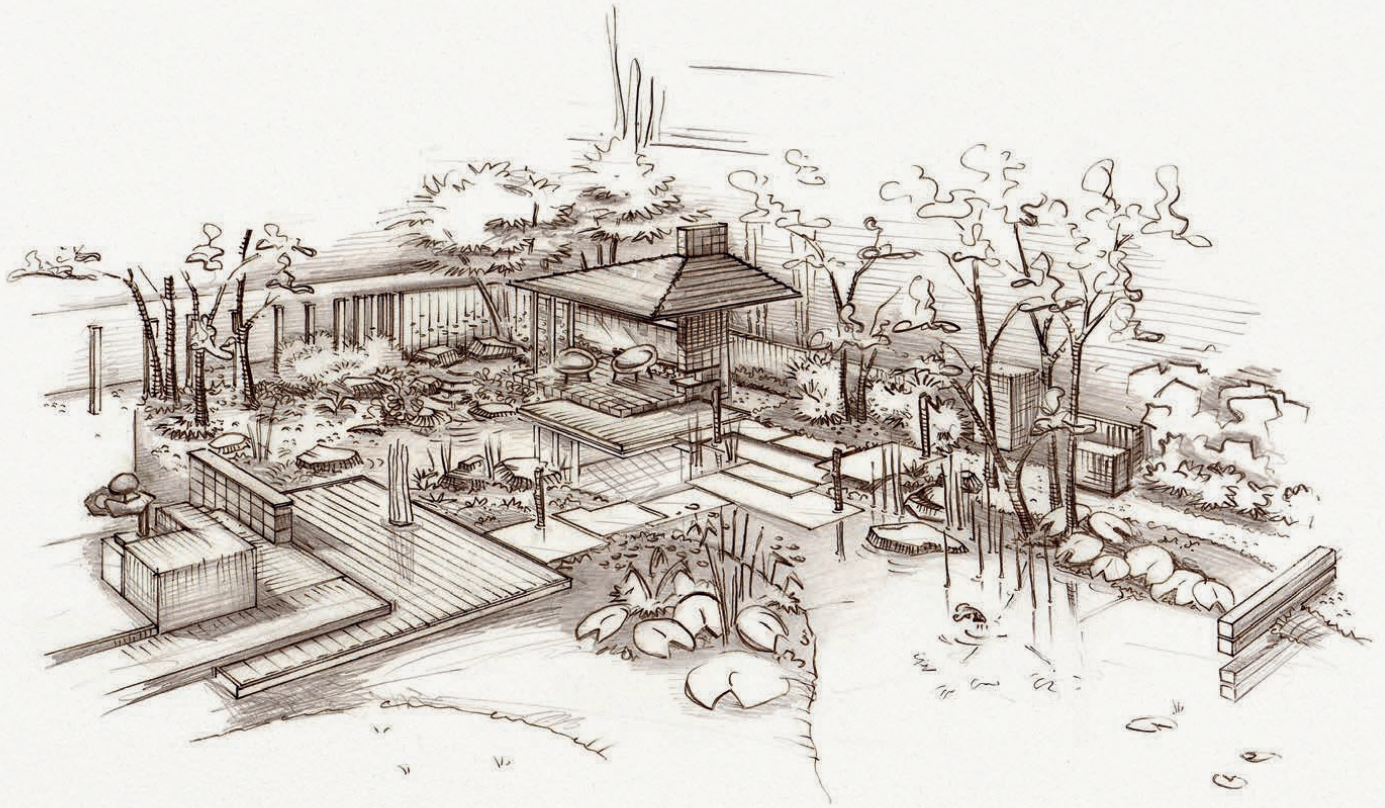
Japandi is a fusion of two worlds: the refined minimalism and traditions of Japan combined with the soft, functional warmth of Scandinavian design. Together, they form spaces that are serene, grounded and purposeful, offering not just visual harmony, but also emotional clarity. Personally, I see it as the perfect marriage. It's a blend that allows you to make it your own, drawing from the best of both cultures. I believe it's essential to shape your living space – indoors and out – in a way that truly reflects who you are. Not by copying everything you see, but by choosing what you genuinely love, even if it doesn't fit perfectly within the traditional boundaries of Japandi. And maybe that's the beauty of it.

At its core, Japandi is about balance: between light and shadow, form and function, tradition and innovation. It's not loud. It doesn't try to impress. Instead, it invites us to slow down and notice – the grain of the wood, the space between stones, the play of sunlight through leaves and branches.

The principles and philosophies of Japandi translate beautifully to both indoor and outdoor spaces. In this book, I'll explore the Japandi lifestyle as a whole, showing how it can shape your outdoor environment and how to create a smooth, natural flow between inside and outside.

As I emphasise in all my books about the aesthetic, these are my ideas of how to live this (life)style. The great thing is, you're free to make it your own, as much or as little as you want. Just choose the parts that work for you. And I hope you enjoy this book as much as I enjoyed creating it.







## CHAPTER ONE

# In harmony with nature

In this chapter, we explore how the gentle interplay of simplicity, balance and natural beauty can transform outdoor spaces into living works of art. No matter the size of the space, the Japandi approach helps create a place where you can relax, recharge, feel at ease, and entertain with intention.

Inspired by the timeless traditions of Japan and the clean, sustainable ethos of Scandinavia, Japandi design celebrates harmony, functionality, warmth and minimalist elegance. By bringing this philosophy to your outdoor areas, you can create a seamless flow between indoors and out, blurring the boundaries and inviting nature in.

At the heart of Japandi lies a deep respect for nature and natural materials. Wood, stone, bamboo and linen are chosen not just for their durability and tactile beauty, but also for how they evolve gracefully over time. Their organic textures and muted hues remind us of the raw beauty of the natural world, reinforcing Japandi's commitment to authenticity and sustainability.

This design philosophy turns outdoor spaces into ever-changing canvases, where the interplay of light, shadow and seasonal shifts becomes an integral part of the experience. Even indoors, shadows – like those cast by swaying tree branches just outside your window – can echo the outside world, connecting the two realms. By embracing the imperfections of nature, Japandi creates environments that feel grounded, timeless and tranquil. It encourages us to slow down and appreciate the quiet dialogue between human craftsmanship and the wild, imperfect beauty of the earth.

Japandi outdoor living is about embracing imperfections – not just accepting them, but also highlighting them. Like *kintsugi*, the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with gold, where the cracks aren't hidden but illuminated. The flaws become part of the story, part of the beauty. They remind us that brokenness isn't the end, but that it can be a new beginning, made stronger and more meaningful than before.



# Core principles of Japandi

Japandi is more than just a collection of colours on a wall or a passing interior trend – it's not 'just a style'. It's a mindset, a way of living that goes far deeper than surface aesthetics. At its core, Japandi blends the thoughtful calm of Japanese tradition with the functional warmth of Scandinavian design. The result is a holistic philosophy that can be felt in every detail, especially when applied to the spaces we live in, both indoors and out.

Unsurprisingly, the core principles of Japandi are closely tied to the philosophies that shape both cultures. In Japan and Scandinavia alike, design is not only about how something looks, but also about how it makes you feel: how it supports your life, enhances your connection with nature and fosters well-being.

Before we explore these philosophies in depth, I'd love to take a moment to briefly outline the key principles that form the foundation of Japandi design – principles that guide not just the way we decorate a space, but also how we experience and live in it.

















# Minimalism and decluttering

As boring as it may sound, I truly believe that every home and style looks and feels better when it's decluttered. In Japandi design, however, decluttering isn't just a nice-to-have – it's essential. While we often associate decluttering with interiors, your outdoor space deserves the same attention. Take a look at your garden, balcony or terrace: do you really need to place the garbage in sight or leave garden tools out in several places in your garden? A tidy, intentional outdoor space instantly feels more peaceful and refined.

Personally, I really like the 80/20 principle: keep 80% of your belongings out of sight and let just 20% remain visible. You can use this rule for your outside space, too. Of course, it depends on how much you own and it's a bit different outdoors than indoors, but it's a great rule of thumb. Look around, declutter, donate, sell, and create storage for the things you genuinely need or love. Grouping similar items together can also reduce visual clutter.

Think about clever solutions like built-in benches with hidden storage, clean-lined shelving for beautiful essentials, or tucking away tools in a neat cabinet. When you strip away the excess, every remaining piece – whether it's furniture, a plant pot or sculptural feature – gains presence and meaning. In this way, minimalism brings calm, clarity and a touch of elegance to your outdoor space.

*'Minimalism encourages intentional living. When planning a garden, I believe in not exceeding sizes or amounts that don't serve any purpose.'*

*Annika Zetterman – garden designer*



## Balance and harmony

In a Japandi garden, balance and harmony are not about symmetry, but about creating a dialogue between elements. Think of the contrast between rough stone and soft moss, the stillness of gravel beside bamboo blowing in the breeze, or the quiet rhythm of stepping stones that guide you through the space. These relationships are intentional but never forced.

In Japanese philosophy, harmony (*wa*) is seen as a fundamental value. It encourages cooperation, coexistence and gentle respect between different forces – nature and human, stillness and motion, full and empty. In Scandinavian thought, this same concept appears in the way natural materials, muted tones and simple lines work together without noise or competition.

When these values meet in a Japandi garden, the result is a space that feels grounded and alive: not overwhelming or empty, but gently in tune. Every element, from a bench to a single potted plant, has a role to play and space to breathe.

There are multiple ways to create balance and harmony in your garden or on your patio or balcony. Use contrasting textures and shapes by pairing, for example, rough stone with soft foliage, or sleek furniture with organic ceramics. Let these opposites highlight each other. Also, in line with the previous principle, avoid crowding and allow for moments of *Ma* (see page 38) – intentional emptiness. A single tree in a bed of gravel can say more than 10 mismatched shrubs.

Harmony is not just about objects and how they relate to each other. Harmony also arises when an outdoor space is in tune with the place it is located. That's why you should consider the type of greenery you plant in your garden, so that your little piece of the natural world lives in harmony with the flora and fauna that inhabit your surroundings.





