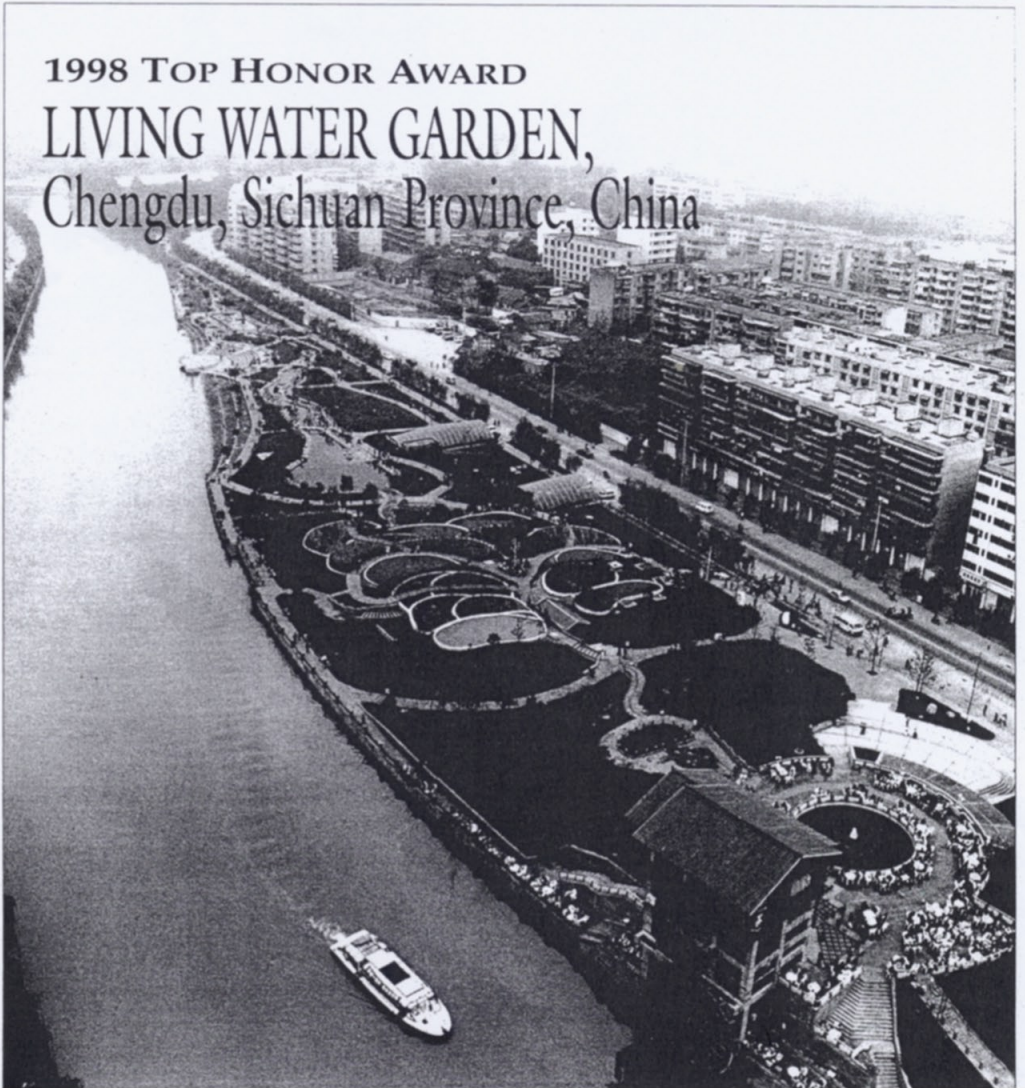


WATERFRONT WORLD

# spotlight

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1998 TOP HONOR AWARD  
LIVING WATER GARDEN,  
Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China



## Top Honor Projects



## ■ Living Water Garden

Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China

*Submitted by:* Betsy Damon, Director, and The Steering Committee of the Fu & Nan Rivers Harnessing Project, Chengdu, Sichuan Province, P.R., China.

While all of the winning projects were held to a certain standard and asked to meet criteria such as: sensitivity of the design to water, quality and harmony of the design, civic contribution, etc., the winner of the top honor would have to demonstrate that it not only met those criteria, but went beyond them. It would have to be extraordinary.

With that said, the jury salutes Chengdu, China's "Living Water Garden" as 1998's "Excellence on the Waterfront" top honor project recipient.

This project celebrates the precious nature of water, champions the desire and determination to embrace a very difficult, exploited site, and proves that a collaborative, public process can overcome severe obstacles to achieving responsible development.

In 1993, in response to middle school students writing letters about polluted waters, the City Government of Chengdu initiated a major flood control, waste treatment, infrastructure development project on the Fu and Nan rivers. At the time, 60,000 cubic meters of sewage was dumped every day into the rivers.

As a way of integrating the components into an educational, aesthetic and public amenity, environmental artist Betsy Damon incorporated a U.S. team to implement the Living Water Garden with a Chinese team—the Director of the Fu-Nan River Comprehensive Renovation Projects, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Environmental Education, and the Department of Water Quality, and selected Chengdu artists, educators and scientists to assist in the design and development.

Designed to underscore the vital link between water and health, the Living Water Garden in Chengdu features sculptural flow forms that facilitate cleansing of water in wetland areas. The flow forms consist of a series of pools that aid in water purification through oscillatory rhythms as the water trickles from one pool to the next along the river's edge. Flow form technology is at work in water purification projects around the globe, but its incorporation here with aesthetics, a public awareness campaign in a public park is truly exemplary.

The Living Water Garden project is committed to making the park a learning experience. It features an interactive environmental education center and a public greenhouse in which Chengdu middle school students can hold classes. A fountain in a landscape of stone provides an area for children to play in the clean water before it is returned to the river. An amphitheater allows for outdoor performances which teach the history of the rivers and interpret the project. Public art pieces and sculptures draw their inspiration from microscopic photographs of living water. The project in its essence provides an outdoor classroom for people to learn how nature operates when left to do the "dirty work."