FESTIVE FALL

Did you know that in China, fall is the season of festivals, harvests, and family reunions? On the Mid-Autumn Festival, families enjoy mooncakes and pomelos under the bright full moon. On the Double Ninth Festival, people pay respect to the elders, go on hikes, and celebrate the festival with a toast of chrysanthemum wine.

NOT EVERYONE GETS TO BE TOGETHER WITH THEIR LOVED ONES, HOWEVER.

There is a well-known Chinese poem written in calligraphy in the garden’s Waterside Pavilion that tells the story of a lonely traveler in Suzhou missing his family on the cold fall night; only the temple bells keep him company. Here is the English translation of the poem, Mooring at Maple Bridge at Night:

MOORING AT MAPLE BRIDGE AT NIGHT

Setting moon, the raven cry, the frost-filled sky,
River maples, fishing lights— facing sorrow, I close my eyes.
Here beyond Suzhou city wall, lies the Cold Mountain Temple:
Midnight, the pealing of its bell reaches this traveler’s boat.

— Zhang Ji, Tang poet (712-779 AD); Translated by Lois Baker.

Isn’t this calligraphy style cool? This poem is written in Chinese cursive script, or “Grass Script”. Only artists with years of practicing Chinese calligraphy can master this writing style.
Can you find them?
Discover the colors and wonders of fall in the garden.

DID YOU KNOW THAT BAMBOO IS A KIND OF GRASS?

Don’t be fooled by its height, bamboo is in the grass family and only flowers once in its life after 60-130 years. Bamboo is admired in China for how flexible and practical it is. It can be used in food, medicine, and even building material.

FULL MOON = REUNION WITH YOUR LOVED ONES.

The shape of a full moon in Chinese culture represents a round table where a family can sit at and enjoy quality time together. On a night of full moon at the Moonlocking Pavilion, you can see the reflection of the moon is being “locked” on the surface of the lake — a beautiful image to remind people to cherish the happy time with their loved ones.

POMEGRANATE: THE SYMBOL OF A BIG HAPPY FAMILY

A Chinese saying goes “Open up a pomegranate; See one hundred seeds.” The seeds in a pomegranate represent the new babies in the household. Pomegranates are sometimes given to new brides and young mothers to wish them the joy of many children.

OSMANTHUS: SCENT OF THE SEASON

Legend has it that there’s an osmanthus tree growing on the moon with the magic power of self-healing. These delicate yellow petals are dry osmanthus and they not only smell nice but also can be added to Chinese desserts and tea. If you are visiting the garden in the right time, you can find the five osmanthus trees blooming in the garden by their sweet scent.