

## Rest in peace

The principles of feng shui are utilized in a new section of cemetery at Valley of the Temples Memorial Park on Oahu

By [Nina Wu](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Mar 22, 2015

Cool winds sweep across the crest of Ocean View Terrace, the newest addition to Valley of the Temples Memorial Park in Kane-ohe, which has panoramic views of both mountain and ocean.

It's quiet up here, except for the splashing of eight geysers at the top of a man-made stream that meanders between boulders and beneath arched bridges to a cascading waterfall below.

It's an ideal resting place for the dead, according to feng shui master Clarence K. Lau, who assisted with the design of the 10-acre section of the cemetery, set within a heart-shaped roadway inside the lush valley.

It comes as no surprise that one of the state's largest cemeteries would incorporate feng shui principles into its design. The trend has caught on at cemeteries around the mainland, including Cali-for-nia, Texas and Minnesota, to accommodate a growing Asian population.

NorthStar Memorial Group of Texas, owner of Valley of the Temples, previously consulted with feng shui masters for its properties in the San Francisco Bay Area and thought it was appropriate for Hawaii, according to Regional Manager Mark Gilmore.

"We know it's such an important element, whether you fully understand the principles of feng shui or not," he said. "I've brought multiple people up here who have said, 'It just feels so peaceful.' People can feel it."

Lau, who offers consultations in Hawaii and Cali-for-nia, was pleased with the results.

"First of all, you see the mountain stretching all the way from the north side continuously to our left. This is what you call a supportive mountain in the back. Then it lowers on the right so it looks like a couch," said Lau, referring to the surrounding Koo-lau Range. "It's like an armchair wrapped around you."

The slope of the terrace is angled to face a view of the ocean to the north, which is more auspicious than a view of the roadway to the east, he said.

Feng shui, which translates as "wind-water," is the ancient Chinese art of achieving balance and harmony in one's environment and a positive flow of energy. It can be applied to everything from arranging furniture at home to the orientation of an office building.

Lau, who trained in Hong Kong, has offered advice for Washington Place and numerous homes and offices for more than 20 years. Although this is his first cemetery consultation, he says the origins of feng shui actually come from the practice of finding a suitable final resting spot for one's ancestors.

"Chinese believed that you put your ancestors in a good energy location for the benefit of the next two generations in the future," he said. "It was important for good luck, prosperity and health."

Standing at the top of the terrace, Lau pointed out how all five feng shui elements — water, wood, fire, earth and metal — are present and in harmony.

The stream offers water, which represents money, while the surrounding green mountains and trees, which stand for the wood element, represent good health. The lawn is earth, while red ti plants in the landscape bring in fire. Metal is also present in the intermittent ringing of the "bon-sho," or sacred bell, from the Byodo-In Temple down below.

"Feng shui is the reading of the land, the reading of nature," said Lau. "Not a superstition or religion."

On the horizon to the north, he pointed to the peak of a range, which he referred to as "triangle mountain," a symbol of authority. The next range over resembles a turtle with an open mouth tilted upward, representing longevity, he said.

NorthStar began construction on the new terrace in the summer of 2013, extending the more-than-100-acre park up a slope in the back of the valley. Ocean View Terrace offers more than 3,500 burial spaces on the lawn. Prices start at \$2,000 for a single burial plot and go up to \$40,000 for a pedestal bench at the top of the stream. Family plots are available as well.

Pedestals, which house urns for cremated remains, are available along the stream and can be custom-designed. The park offers urns in the shape of a lotus flower, an aloha shirt and pair of doves.

Ken Nishihara of Hono-lulu purchased an "estate" for his family, based on Lau's advice. He's been a client of Lau's for 12 years and swears his feng shui consultations have helped him in every aspect of his life.

"It has a nice view and good energy," he said. "The valley, the feeling of peace, and shape of the mountains."

Customers who purchase a burial plot at Ocean View Terrace also get a free feng shui consultation with Lau.

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