It all started in 2008. The koi pond in the Japanese garden at Lotusland, the spectacular Montecito estate often cited as one of the must-see gardens of the world, had grown so murky that one wag described it as “a bowl of turkey gravy.” Newly hired Lotusland chief executive Gwen Stauffer had a solution, but she knew draining the pond, lining the bottom and installing a biofilter would disrupt operations at the landmark gardens. Still, she thought: How hard could it be?

As any homeowner knows, however, one improvement project leads to another. Soon the renovation ranged beyond the koi pond to include updating the Japanese garden with accessible footpaths and, eventually, building originally planned but never realized landscape elements such as a lotus-viewing deck and altogether new features like an enclosure of evergreen cryptomeria trees. But then came the deadly Thomas wildfire in 2017. And mudslides in 2018. And the heavy rains that brought not one but two more emergency evacuations to the area, the posh enclave of celebrity homeowners such as Oprah Winfrey and Ellen DeGeneres. With seemingly everything, including the weather, conspiring against her efforts, Stauffer sometimes wondered if she’d ever see an end to the renovations begun so long ago. “One of the darkest moments was the debris flow,” she recalls. “Everyone’s life here just…"

Montecito’s Lotusland unveils its long-in-the-works renovated Japanese garden

BY EMILY YOUNG

To Lotusland’s Japanese garden took 20 months and $6 million, with natural disasters complicating work. Upgrades include ADA-accessible paths.

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Lotusland, from F1

elaborate. Now, after 11 years and $6 million, Lotusland has finally reopened its beloved Japanese garden.

Since its doors first opened, nature has been able to thrive. The 550-acre property is home to over 400 species of plants, many of which can be found in this unique location. The garden is a celebration of the beauty and diversity of nature, and visitors are welcome to explore its wonders.

The garden's main attraction is the Japanese garden, which features a large pond, a torii gate entrance, and a number of smaller water features. The garden is also home to a number of rare and exotic plants, including a number of species that are only found in this region.

The renovation of the Japanese garden included the replacement of the original pond, which was drained and refilled last month. The pond is now home to a number of koi, which were transferred from a nearby pond. The koi are a popular attraction, and visitors can watch as they swim in the pond and feed them.

The Japanese garden is just one of the many attractions at Lotusland. The property also includes a number of other gardens and walkways, each with its own unique beauty.

Lotusland is a popular destination for both locals and visitors from around the world. With its stunning beauty and serene atmosphere, it is a perfect place to escape the stresses of daily life and connect with nature.