

Types of prayer wheels

Our prayer wheel at the Garden contains one million hand painted prayers on individual pieces of paper. The prayer wheel weighs 400 lbs and was hand-made by goldsmiths and painters in Dharamsala, India.

Mani Wheel - hand held prayer wheel- Cylinder turns with a slight rotation of the wrist. When Tibetans go on pilgrimage, they carry their prayer wheels and spin the mantras as they walk or sit.

Stationery Wheels - Many monasteries around Tibet have large fixed metal wheels which sit side by side in a row. Passersby can turn the entire row of wheels simply by sliding their hands over each one.

There is a place on Whidbey Island, Washington called the **Earth Sanctuary** that has three high tech prayer wheels. They are about a foot in diameter and are filled with 1.3 trillion mantras. This is accomplished by installing 128 DVDs filled with the mantra repetitions. A good spin on this prayer wheel causes the prayer wheel to make 100 revolutions, releasing 27,000 prayers for each of the 5 billion human beings on the planet.

Water Wheels - These wheels are designed to be turned by flowing water. The water that is touched by the wheel is said to become blessed and carries purifying power into all life forms in the oceans and lakes that it feeds into.

Fire Wheels - These wheels are turned by the heat of a candle or electric light. The light emitted from the prayer wheel then purifies the negative karmas of the living beings it touches.

Wind Wheels - The wind that touches the prayer wheel helps alleviate the negative karmas of those it touches.

Electric Prayer Wheels - These are powered by electric motors. They are called **Thardo Khorlo** and contain one thousand copies of the mantra Om Mani Padme Hum and other mantras. According to Lama Zopa Rinpoche, the merit of turning an electric prayer wheel goes to the electric company. That's why he prefers practitioners to use their own energy to turn a prayer wheel. Our prayer wheel at the Garden was originally designed to use electricity to create a continuous spin. As an organization promoting sustainability we have opted to turn the wheel by hand.

Digital Prayer Wheels - The Dalai Lama has commented that animated GIFs on websites work just as well as other prayer wheels. As the GIF image turns, waves of compassion emanate in all directions to the surrounding area.

Internet-operated Prayer Wheel - This type of prayer is a stationary electric prayer wheel which can be activated over a web interface. Before turning the wheel a wish or mantra can be entered at the web interface. Via a webcam the user can watch the wheel.

The 8 Auspicious Symbols

Often the 8 Auspicious symbols are painted on the prayer wheel.

1. **Lotus Flower** - represents purity and enlightenment.
2. **Endless Knot** - Represents harmony. Since the endless knot has no beginning or end, it symbolizes the infinite wisdom of the Buddha.
3. **Golden Fishes** - Symbolize happiness. They also represent fertility and abundance.
4. **Victory Banner** - Victory over ignorance. An emblem of Buddha's enlightenment.
5. **Wheel of Dharma** - Knowledge or truth.
6. **Treasure Vase** - Represents inexhaustible treasure and wealth. In Buddhism it specifically means the spiritual abundance of the Buddha, a treasure that did not diminish, however much of it he gave away.
7. **Parasol** - Function is to cast a shadow of protection. Transferring the protection to a religious sphere, it is protection from the heat of defilements (anger, greed, etc.) and negativity. The parasol dome symbolizes wisdom and the hanging skirt, compassion.
8. **Conch Shell** - Representing the thoughts of the Buddha.

Information provided by the generosity of Mary Ann Chubb



Sawtooth Botanical Garden

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SAWTOOTH BOTANICAL GARDEN
Celebrating Plants • Inspiring People

Prayer Wheels



Our Mission

The Sawtooth Botanical Garden is a community resource showcasing native and cultivated plants that flourish at high altitude. The Garden connects people to the region's unique beauty and fosters environmental stewardship through education, events, displays and plant collections.

Historical Origins

The great Indian Buddhist scholar, **Nagarjuna** concluded that setting the Buddha's words in motion by mechanical means had the same effect as recitation by the human voice. By writing down the text in a continuous line, the way it would normally be spoken, he then rolled it up and put it in a cylindrical container. Fitted with handles or other devices, the cylinder could be turned by hand, water, wind, steam or convection. **Nagarjuna** is associated with the rise of Mahayana Buddhism during the first century BC. He is known as the founder of the Middle Way school of Buddhist philosophy, which all currently existing schools of Tibetan Buddhism accept as the most profound of all philosophical views.

Later the prayer wheel lineage was brought to Tibet by the renowned eighth century Indian master, **Padmasambhava** and later practiced by great Indian tantric Buddhist masters Tilopa, Naropa and Milarepa.

This invention, known in Tibet as the **Mani Chos-khor**, or **precious Dharma wheel**, provided everyone a way to offer heartfelt wishes that all beings be free from suffering. As monks and lay people held the wheels at the level of their heart and rotated them clockwise, they discovered that turning the wheels had a comforting and invigorating effect on their bodies and minds. This perception led to the construction of larger wheels, which is believed to have an even greater effect on the human heart and mind.



Hand spun prayer wheels in Tibet

A prayer wheel can be encased in copper, silver, and even gold. Traditionally, the mantra **Om Mani Padme Hum** is written in Sanskrit externally on the wheel. **Om Mani Padme Hum** is translated as the **OM Jewel in the Lotus HUM**. The word mantra means mind protection. According to Tibetan Buddhist tradition, spinning a prayer wheel will have the same meritorious effect as orally reciting the prayers. It is said that prayer wheels are used to accumulate wisdom and merit or good karma and to purify negativities such as bad karma.

The Traditional Prayer Wheel Practice

Practitioners spin the prayer wheel slowly in a clockwise direction, recites the mantra **Om Mani Padme Hum**. They repeat the mantra as many times as possible during the turning of the wheel and visualize pure white light rays emanating out from the spinning prayer wheel. It is believed the pure light originates from the millions of mantras inside the prayer wheel and goes out to the practitioners and sentient beings, purifying, healing, and illuminating everyone. As the light rays spread through the whole universe, it is believed we instantly become awakened and realize the Four Immeasurables of Love, Compassion, Joy and Equanimity.

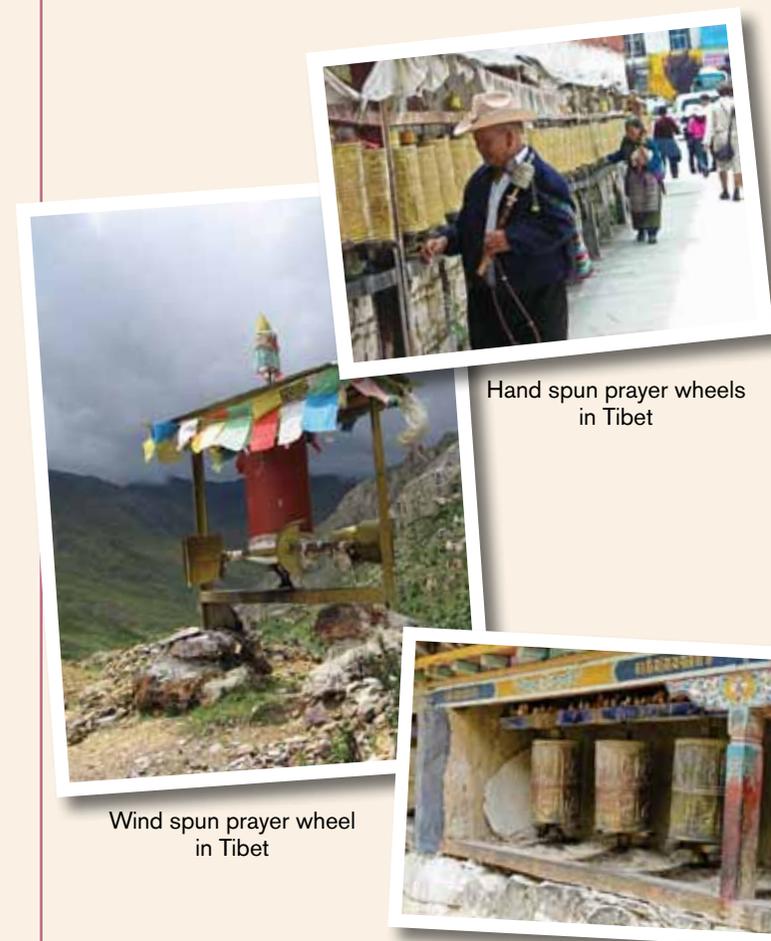
*In his book **Heart Treasure of the Enlightened Ones**, Gen Rinpoche says of the mantra:*

*The mantra Om Mani Padme Hum is easy to say, yet quite powerful, because it contains the essence of the Buddha's entire teaching. When you say the first syllable **Om** it is blessed to help you achieve perfection in the practice of generosity, **Ma** helps perfect the practice of pure ethics, and **Ni** helps achieve perfection in the practice of tolerance and patience. **Pad**, the fourth syllable, helps to achieve perfection of perseverance, **Me** helps achieve perfection in the practice of concentration, and the final sixth syllable **Hum** helps achieve perfection in the practice of wisdom. In this way, recitation of the mantra helps achieve perfection in the six practices from generosity to wisdom. The path of these six perfections is the path walked by all the Buddhas of the three times. What could be more*

meaningful than to say the mantra and accomplish the 6 perfections?

Each revolution of the prayer wheel is symbolic of reading the inscription aloud as many times as it is written on the scroll. This means that the more **Om Mani Padme Hum** mantras are inside a prayer wheel then it is thought to be more powerful. It is also said that simply touching a prayer wheel brings purification of negative karmas and obscurations.

There's also a Buddhist tradition of asking the Buddhas and bodhisattvas to dedicate any accumulated merits that you may have gathered during practice to all beings. This is standard with Tibetans completing any Buddhist practice including the practice of the prayer wheel.



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Wind spun prayer wheel in Tibet

Hand spun prayer wheels in Tibet