

Hmong Dialects in the China Friendship Garden

The Hmong language has two main dialects: Green/Blue Hmong and White Hmong. Both dialects are used in the China Friendship Garden. These dialects are named after the colors that are traditionally worn by women in each group and, although their pronunciation, phonology and vocabulary can vary, they both stem from the western branch of Hmong-Yao from over two-thousand years ago, and according to Hmong elders, the Green dialect is the original Hmong language. It is unclear which dialect is more widely used among Hmong Americans, some believe it is the White dialect; however, the Green dialect is more widely spoken around the world, including in China. Even though the dialects are written differently, they both still represent the Hmong language. By including the Green dialect on the engraved stones, we further connect the Hmong history and the Hmong Plaza to China and the Chinese Pavilion to emphasize the bond, the ties and the friendship between Changsha and Saint Paul. Therefore, it is important to include both dialects on the four engraved stones to display harmony and balance within the China Friendship Garden and respect for speakers of both dialects.



The first stone installed in 2019, the Naming Stone for the China Friendship Garden at the West Entrance Archway (above left), is engraved in the White Hmong dialect. One of the Art Stones installed in 2021 (above right), emphasizing the importance of education, also uses the White Hmong dialect.



Two of the other Art Stones are engraved in the Green/Blue Hmong dialect. One stone welcomes all visitors to the China Garden (above left) ["Moob" means "Hmong" in Green/Blue Hmong] and one stone is engraved with a famous proverb passed down orally for generations (above right).

[Source: Scholars Lee Pao Xiong & Bee Vang-Moua, MCFGH Hmong Advisory Committee]