

niponica

Discovering
Japan

No.

26

にほにか



Special Feature

Welcome to Japanese Gardens



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contents



Cover: Enkouji (Kyoto)
Photo: Tsuchimura Seiji / Aflo

niponica is published in Japanese and six other languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish) to introduce to the world the people and culture of Japan today. The title *niponica* is derived from "Nippon," the Japanese word for Japan.

Special Feature

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"Jugyu no niwa" garden of Enkouji Temple (Kyoto Prefecture).
This garden's picturesque beauty was created on the theme of
"Jugyuzu," a series of paintings depicting a child chasing a cow.
Photo: Sudo Koich / Aflo

Special Feature

Welcome to Japanese Gardens

Japanese gardens attracting people as seasons change, modeling after nature.
Why not look into the fascinating world of Japanese gardens?



Beautiful Gardens in Japan

Photo: Sudo Koichi, Tanaka Shigeki, Sato Tetsuro/Aflo, (c) Ushio Hamashita/a.collectionRF/amanaimages

Japanese gardens with long histories. Their changing scenery amid abundant natural surroundings and through the four seasons is a pleasure to watch.

Katsura Imperial Villa (Kyoto Prefecture)



Spring

Heian Jingu Shrine (Kyoto Prefecture)



Autumn

Koishikawa Korakuen (Tokyo Metropolis)



Summer

Kenrokuen (Ishikawa Prefecture)



Winter

Shinsenen (Kyoto Prefecture)



The beautiful sights and sensations of Japanese gardens

Enjoy the view of a Japanese garden.
 Feel as if you are blending into nature as you gaze at it.
 By looking at and feeling Japanese gardens, you can come closer to the essence of their beauty.
 Left: Taizo-in "Yokoen Pond Strolling Garden" (Kyoto Prefecture, photo: Taizo-in)
 Below: Genko-an (Kyoto Prefecture, Photo: torakichi/PIXTA)

Pathway to the even more extraordinary

Walking to the tea-ceremony house on stepping stones arranged as a path, you will be overcome with the wonderful feeling that you are being led into new space.
 Below: Ritsurin Garden (Kagawa Prefecture, photo: R. CREATION/Aflo)
 Right: Garden at a Japanese-style inn, "Kojun" (Kyoto Prefecture, photo: R. CREATION/Aflo)



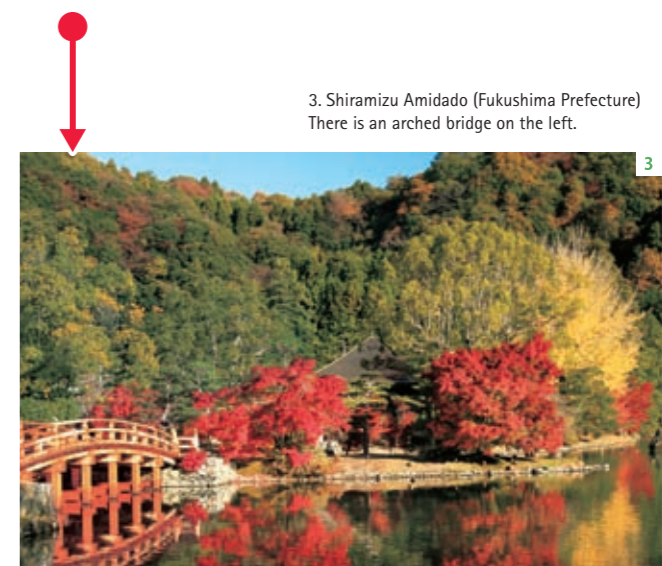
Japanese Gardens

Changes in Style

Japanese gardens are characterized by modeling after natural scenery.

How has the style been established and changed?
Let's trace the history of Japanese gardens that have been affected by each era and have developed in a unique way.

Supervised by: Amasaki Hiromasa



7th century - 8th century
Gardens in Ancient Times

9th century
**Gardens of the
Shinden-zukuri Style**

10th century - 11th century
Jodo Gardens

Above: Motsuji Temple Garden (Iwate Prefecture), a good example of a *jodo* garden

3. Shiramizu Amidado (Fukushima Prefecture)
There is an arched bridge on the left.

1. East Palace Garden on the Nara Palace Site (Nara Prefecture) with an extensive *suhama* on the shore of the pond, in front of the building; restored from about 1,300 years ago.
2. Model of Higashi Sanjoden in Heiankyo (ancient Kyoto). At present, there is no existing *shinden-zukuri* style garden that retains the original state. Starting from the courtyard in front of the main hall, a series of bridges linking the islands enable visitors to stroll across the pond.

Characteristics of Japanese Gardens

The Japanese garden expresses artificial hills, ponds, and streams through artistic use of trees, rocks, sand, etc. In contrast to the geometrically arranged trees and rocks of a Western-style garden, Japanese garden design traditionally minimizes human involvement as far as possible to create a scenic composition that mimics nature.

Gardens in Ancient Times

The earliest known gardens in Japan date back to the Asuka period (593–710) and the Nara period (710–794). In the Yamato area (former Nara Prefecture), imperial family and powerful clans created ocean scenes that featured large ponds dotted with islands and *suhama* (sandy beaches) on the shore.

Gardens of the Shinden-zukuri Style

The capital of Japan was moved from Nara to Kyoto in 794, and the Heian period (794–1185) began. As a noble family, the Fujiwara clan, consolidated its grip on power, art and culture based on unique Japanese ideas developed. These aristocrats lived in luxurious mansions built in the style called *shinden-zukuri*. The gardens of that era were

also magnificent.

Several rivers converged on Kyoto, which was also richly endowed with spring water. Because summertime conditions in Kyoto are hot and humid, local residents fashioned ponds and waterfalls in order to evoke a sense of coolness. Streams called *yarimizu* were made to flow between buildings and through the gardens of mansions. In the mansion grounds, they created ponds large enough to accommodate boating and also fishing pavilions that projected over the water and were connected by covered corridors to the other structures. These pavilions were ideal for enjoying the cool of the evening or watching the moon or snow. Between the main buildings and the pond was an area covered with white sand, providing a picturesque site for the holding of formal ceremonies.

Jodo Gardens

From the 10th through 11th centuries, Japan's aristocracy became increasingly devout in its practice of Buddhism. As the belief spread that the true teaching of Buddhism might disappear in due course, the gardens came to be modeled on images of *jodo* (pure land) as described in scripture and religious tracts. In this type of garden, the focal point is the pond, with an arched bridge reaching to a central island. Motsuji Temple Garden in Iwate Prefecture and Shiramizu Amidado in Fukushima Prefecture still demonstrate the atmosphere of *Jodo* gardens.



Above: Ryoanji (Kyoto Prefecture). A typical Japanese dry landscape garden.



Above: A *kaiyu* style garden, Suizenji Jojuen Garden (Kumamoto Prefecture)

12th century Gardens of the Zen Sect

Gardens of the Zen Sect

The Kamakura period (1185–1333) that followed the Heian period saw the rise of a warrior class and the influence of a Buddhist sect called *Zen*, bringing about changes in the styles of residential buildings and garden creation. It was not the custom of the warrior class, not even the military elite, to hold splendid ceremonies in their gardens.

Japanese gardens reached one of their pinnacles in the subsequent Muromachi period (1333–1568). Groups of skilled craftsmen called *senzui kawaramono* (people living around mountains, streams, and riverbeds - particularly gardeners) were responsible for creating a new style of garden, known as *karesansui* (Japanese dry landscapes). Heavily influenced by *Zen* Buddhism, these gardens are characterized by extreme abstraction. Arrangement of rocks represents mountains or waterfalls, and white sand is used to replace flowing water. This form of garden cannot be seen in any other part of the world.

In addition, gardens of that period were greatly influenced by the style of architecture known as *shoin-zukuri*, which still serves as the prototype for current traditional style Japanese houses. The garden admired from the building is designed to give the viewer situated in a *shoin* (room in a *shoin-zukuri* building) a sense that he or she is appreciating a masterpiece of painting and to lead one to careful and extended viewing.

16th century Tea Gardens



Tea Gardens

The tea garden, imbued with tranquil spirituality, was developed in conjunction with the tea culture that was perfected by Sen no Rikyu (1522–1591), a master of tea ceremony. It was through the tea garden, which avoided artificiality and was created so as to retain a highly natural appearance, that one approached the tea ceremony house. Today's Japanese gardens incorporate a number of elements inherited from the tea garden, such as stepping stones, stone lanterns, clusters of trees and/or washbasins. The simply designed tea pavilion in which guests are served tea also originated with the tea garden.

17th century *Kaiyu* Style Gardens

Present



1. Tea pavilion at Sento Imperial Palace (Kyoto Prefecture)
2. Stepping stones arranged methodically from the entrance to the tea ceremony house.
3. A stone lantern used for lighting and ornamentation inside the garden
4. Raising flowers and plants visually enriches the garden

Kaiyu Style Gardens

The various forms taken by gardens over the centuries culminated in *kaiyu* style gardens in the Edo period (1603–1867). Historic stones and tasteful trees were used to create miniature reproductions of famous scenes. People enjoyed the seasonal changes of scenery while strolling and appreciating the large ponds. The garden of the Katsura Imperial Villa in Kyoto, a creation of the early Edo period, is a typical *kaiyu* style garden with a pond in the center surrounded by several tea pavilions. The so-called “Three Great Gardens” in Japan - Kairakuen Garden in Mito City, Ibaraki Prefecture; Kenrokuen in Kanazawa City,



Above: Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden with an extensive lawn area

Ishikawa Prefecture; Korakuen in Okayama City, Okayama Prefecture - and Suizenji Jojuen Garden in Kumamoto Prefecture are of this style created by feudal lords.

At the beginning of the Meiji period (1868–1912), western influences began extending even into traditional Japanese garden design, such as incorporating spaces with extensive lawns. Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden in Tokyo is one example.

Amasaki Hiromasa
Scholar of landscape architecture, garden creator, professor at Kyoto University of Art and Design. Awarded the Japanese Institute of Landscape Architecture Prize in 1991. After serving as President of the Kyoto College of Art and Vice President of the Kyoto University of Art and Design, took up current position as Honorary Director of Research Center for Japanese Garden Art and Historical Heritage.

Photos: Nara City Tourist Association, the Museum of Kyoto, Leemu, @fukui_norisuke, shalion/PIXTA, Sudo Koichi/Aflo, Izumi Shrine, Shinjuku Gyoen, Ministry of the Environment

Creators of Japanese Gardens

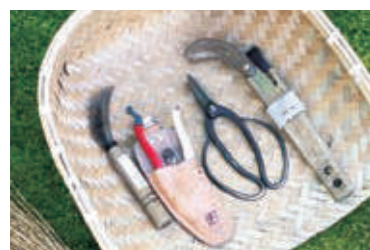
Experts who take care of Japanese gardens. What kind of mindset drives them to create gardens?

Cooperation: UEYAKATO LANDSCAPE Co., LTD.
Text: Kamieshu Noriko, Photo: Kanai Gen



Above: Handa checks the condition of flowering plants in a garden and tends to them.

Below: One of the gardeners' roles is to respond to visitors who talk to them on the job. Gardeners play an important part in presentation of their creations.



From left bottom: Saw for weeding, pruning shears, hedge clippers, and pruning saw. Gardeners purchase their own tools to suit their specific tasks.

Pleasure working with all my colleagues to create gardens I love

Handa Sanae, Gardener, UEYAKATO LANDSCAPE Co., LTD.

Handa Sanae has been working in this company for four years. On her junior high school trip, she was moved by the beauty of Japanese gardens in Kyoto because they expressed the goodness of nature. “I had wanted to become a gardener for a long time. So, I was overjoyed when I got the chance to start my career with this company by pulling weeds inside the roped-off area of the garden,” she says.

Handa maintains that just being in the garden makes her happy. She thoroughly enjoys her job. For a few years after joining the company, she was involved in wildflower research while learning the gardening work. Utilizing knowledge gained during that period, she also created wildflower compilations for garden visitors. “I can concentrate on pulling weeds all day while paying attention to every corner of the garden and think how many wildflowers should be left. I can utilize my feminine sensitivity and advantages as a woman,” she states. Currently, she is also involved in management of ground cover plants at Nanzenji Temple in Kyoto. Nanzenji, listed as one of Japan’s important cultural properties, is a famous temple with a garden designated as a “place of scenic beauty.”

“Once a month, the company President and my superiors come over and give me various kinds of advice.” It is impressive that gardeners cooperate with each other to maintain gardens. Handa feels very rewarded and motivated to work in Japanese gardens that have been created in concert with all of her colleagues.

Appreciating and harmonizing feelings, Japanese gardens are Japan itself

Kato Tomoki, Representative President, UEYAKATO LANDSCAPE Co., LTD.

“Murin-an” in Kyoto, a representative garden created in the Meiji period (late 19th through early 20th centuries). UEYAKATO LANDSCAPE Co., LTD. has been managing the garden as designated administrator. Kato Tomoki grew up watching his father enjoying his job as a gardener and was attracted by Japanese gardens. Now heading the company as its eighth president, he feels that he has a responsibility to maintain the tradition.

The workflow of creating gardens starts with research into the climate and natural features of the region and proceeds through planning, designing and executing. For existing gardens or upon completion, gardeners grow and manage the plantings. Plants require year-round maintenance and comprehensive judgment is needed for such gardening considerations as determining how to match plants to the atmosphere of a particular garden.

Kato also provides technical guidance and training to the gardeners at the Japanese garden in Washington Park in Portland, Oregon, U.S.A. “The underlying principle in creating Japanese gardens is to use local trees and plants. While utilizing local plants that best suit the region’s weather and natural features, we seek to reflect Japanese tradition, which focuses on harmony with nature,” he says of creating Japanese gardens in locations outside of Japan. He works with local personnel and provides guidance on plant cultivation and management. He also has them experience Japanese culture, including the tea ceremony, and learn to appreciate understated natural beauty so that they can develop the mindset needed to create Japanese gardens.

“Japanese gardens are nurtured for hundreds of years by taking up the legacy of generations of clients’ and gardeners’ thoughts and sentiments. However, new owners



Mr. Kato believes that one gardener can only do so much, and he places emphasis on training personnel. The attitude of focusing on cooperating and sharing information with other gardeners has also been passed on to Handa.



may reconstruct gardens in other countries. Also, in Japan, we have a custom of cooperating with neighbors so that their views are not obstructed. But, this must be unique to Japan.” He believes that the concept of Japanese gardens, consisting of continuous time and space, may be learned by placing oneself in and experiencing natural surroundings.

“When I’m training young gardeners, I want to keep in mind how to balance degeneration and evolution, in addition to how to grow and manage Japanese gardens.” Kato is thinking flexibly and positively about the future of Japanese gardens.

Japanese garden overseas restoration project

Currently, it is believed, there are more than 500 Japanese gardens outside of Japan. However, it is difficult to maintain and manage them, and some gardens require restoration and repairs. In 2017, the Japanese government initiated a restoration project for those gardens. Japanese garden specialists are dispatched to carry out restoration programs and manuals are provided so that local specialists can easily understand how to maintain and manage the gardens.



In 2018, activities at the Japanese garden in Cranbrook, Michigan, U.S.A



Search Japan's Finest Gardens in Various Regions!

Where is that garden?
Let's check the map to find the areas where the gardens you've heard about are located.

Kyoto

京都



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Enkouji

At the back of the Jugyu no niwa Gardens shown on the Table of Contents page is an expanse of bamboo groves, allowing you to enjoy different views.
(Photograph courtesy of: Enkouji Temple)



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Katsura Imperial Villa

Built as the imperial family's villa in the 17th century. A famous garden that condenses the best of Japanese beauty.
(Photograph courtesy of: @fukui_norisuke/PIXTA)



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Shinsen-en

A garden created for the Emperor. Well known as a verdant garden in the middle of town.
(Photograph courtesy of: Shinsen-en Temple)



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Ryoan-ji

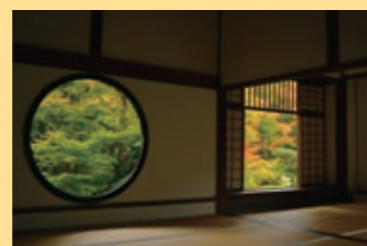
A Hojo garden known as a rock garden that represents a dry landscape of mountains and water. A garden with a mysterious aspect.
(Photograph courtesy of: Ryoan-ji Temple)



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Taizo-in

At the famed Yokoen garden, blossom-viewing parties with meal are held during limited periods in the best seasons for, respectively, cherry blossoms, lotus flowers, and autumn leaves.
(Photograph courtesy of: Taizo-in Zen Buddhist Temple)



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Genko-an

A garden of the Zen Sect created in 1346. Here, you can appreciate different aspects by viewing it through either rectangular or round windows.
(Photo: HoM/PIXTA)



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Murin-an Garden

A garden created with a new, naturalistic perspective – a masterpiece of modern Japanese gardening. Open all year.
(Photograph courtesy of: UEYAKATO LANDSCAPE Co., LTD.)



Kumamoto

熊本

On Page 13

Suizenji Jojuen Garden

This garden is famous for its pure water. The natural spring water that formed the origin of the park continues to flow in force, even to this day.
(Photograph courtesy of: Kumamoto City Tourism Policy Division)



Ishikawa

石川

On Page 6

Kenrokuen

One of Japan's "Three Great Gardens." Located in the middle of Kanazawa city, this garden is beautiful throughout all four seasons. Here you can enjoy gardening methods from a variety of different eras.
(Photograph courtesy of: Kanazawa City)



Iwate

岩手

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Motsuji Temple Garden

Registered as a World Heritage Site, even now, after 800 years, the garden retains an unchanging beauty. Together the building and the pond represent the Buddhist "Pure Land."
(Photograph courtesy of: Motsuji Temple)



Fukushima

福島

On Page 11

Shiramizu Amidado

The gardens here feature the Amidado Hall, which is a National Treasure of Japan, and can be enjoyed throughout all four seasons with some beautiful trees and shrubs such as plum, cherry, lotus, and clover, as well as the vivid foliage in the fall.
(Photograph courtesy of: Ganjō-ji)

Ibaraki

茨城

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Kairakuen Garden

One of Japan's "Three Great Gardens." There are some 3,000 plum trees of 100 varieties planted in the garden, and in late February there are plum blossoms everywhere.
(Photograph courtesy of: Ibaraki Prefectural Government)



Okayama

岡山

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Korakuen

One of Japan's "Three Great Gardens." Beautiful scenic views created to harmoniously blend in with Okayama Castle and the surrounding mountains.
(Photograph courtesy of: Okayama Prefectural Tourism Federation)



Tokyo

東京

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Koishikawa Korakuen

This garden has been designated as one of Japan's "special historic sites" and a "special place of scenic beauty." It is the oldest Japanese garden in Tokyo.
(Photograph courtesy of: Tokyo Metropolitan Park Association)



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Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden

A garden representative of a modern Western garden. It was created as a garden for the imperial family before being opened up to the general public. Popular as an oasis in the city center.
(Photograph courtesy of: Shinjuku Gyoen, Ministry of the Environment)



Kagawa

香川

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Ritsurin Garden

This garden was completed 300 years ago. This vast garden set against a mountainous background is the largest garden in Japan to be classified as a "cultural property." It extends over some 75 hectares.
(Photograph courtesy of: Kagawa Prefecture Tourism Association)



Japanese Garden Expressed in Digital Art

The development of digital technology enhances the way to enjoy a Japanese garden

Photo/Cooperation: teamLab



"Drawing on Water Surface Created by the Dance of Koi and Boats – Mifuneyama Rakuen Pond"
Images of carp projected onto the surface of the pond change as a small boat floats and moves around, creating new expressions on the pond.



Left: Mifuneyama Rakuen is famous for a 3,000 year-old - or older - sacred tree, the 7th largest in Japan.

Above: Thanks to fusion with digital technology, a world emerges whereby you feel as if you have strayed into an unknown forest.

What digital art conveys through highlighting nature as it exists within a garden

Mifuneyama Rakuen is a magnificent garden in Saga Prefecture in the Kyushu region, covering an extensive area of 500,000 square meters and containing a large pond. Here, an art exhibition utilizing digital technology has been held each year since 2015. It is called "A Forest Where Gods Live" and is developed by teamLab, an art collective group of digital specialists.

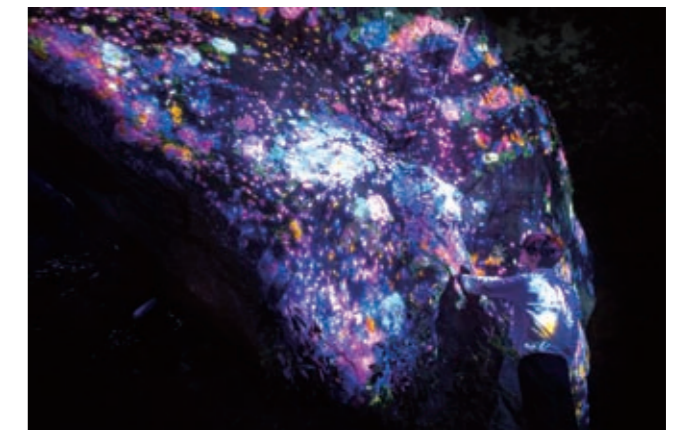
Their vision of "mounting an exhibition whereby you feel as if you have strayed into an extensive garden and forest and become part of something" was realized as "A Forest Where Gods Live," which teaches us a new way to enjoy a Japanese garden.

Japanese gardens are not confined to limited spaces within the garden framework. They are created in harmony with their surroundings by successive generations of gardeners. Therefore, there are no boundaries of space or time. In "A Forest Where Gods Live," the shapes of the forest itself are utilized to transform the garden into digital art. Images of flowers blossoming and petals falling are projected onto a huge ancient rock in the garden after sunset. Also, images of carp are projected on the surface of water and their movements change as a small boat moves around the pond.

Digital technology makes it possible to turn nature into art without destroying the nature. Thus, the garden as it exists becomes a work of art. In a space where we feel as if we have been integrated into the surroundings, we can rediscover through this exhibition that there are certain aspects of nature and attractions of place (space) that emerge only after darkness meets modern technology.

Even if you think that you do not know how to appreciate Japanese gardens, what you feel through the exhibition is precisely the same sensation that experience when

exploring such a garden; that is, "the feeling of being integrated into the space." Even young persons can visit this Japanese garden to experience the Japanese concept of "uniting nature and people."



"Ever Blossoming Life Rock": Flowers keep blossoming and their petals fall eternally onto a huge rock covered in moss. Images are continuously drawn in real time by a computer program, and the same image will never be repeated.

teamLab
Founded in 2001, teamLab is an art collective, interdisciplinary group comprising specialists in the digital technology field. teamLab is exploring new relationships between humans and nature, and oneself and the world, through arts.



Visitors may enjoy being greeted with a Mini Japanese Garden placed just in front of the gate, as well as one located in an internal room.

The small version serves as a perfect accent in your living room.

Let's Enjoy! Japanese Garden Indoors

Photo/Cooperation: Niwasho FU-GEN Tokyo
Photo: Kanai Gen

With a compact Mini Japanese Garden, it's easy to enjoy the benefits of Japanese landscape art indoors and totally change the ambience of your room.

Let's take a look at a room featuring a Mini Japanese Garden.

Even if you cannot transform your yard into a Japanese garden, you can easily incorporate the sensation of one into everyday living with a Mini Japanese Garden.

Key materials of the Mini Japanese Garden are moss, stones and sand. You can keep your garden in good condition by moderately spraying water on the moss. Everyone loves the ease of maintenance. It can be placed anywhere - living room, bed room, or entrance hall. Because it's portable, you can enjoy it in different spaces and various ways.

Freely experimenting with your Mini Japanese Garden will help you to understand and appreciate Japanese landscape art.



Niwasho FU-GEN Tokyo

Fukatsu Shintaro and Horiuchi Chie are a married couple who operate Niwasho FU-GEN Tokyo. They create and manage gardens for individual homes, traditional Japanese restaurants, shrines, and temples.

Yudofu Kaiseki

Entertaining dishes for enjoying seasonal tastes

Text: Ishizuka Tokie; Photo: Nanzenji Junsei

Tofu is made of soy milk, which is the squeezed juice of soy beans, curdled with *nigari*, a coagulating agent. The Japanese love the rich and refreshing soy bean fragrance and the smooth texture of the curd. *Tofu* is also attracting attention these days as a healthy food because it is packed with nutrients such as protein, vitamins and minerals.

Yudofu is a pot dish in which *tofu* is warmed in hot water with kelp. You eat it with a soy sauce-based dipping sauce and a sprinkling of condiments. Since it is a simple dish, you can fully enjoy the taste of *tofu*. There are various dipping sauce and condiment preferences, depending on the region and the particular restaurant. For example, some use *ponzu* (soy sauce blended with citrus juice) for dipping sauce and some use green onions, bonito flakes, or grated *daikon* radish as condiments.

It originated as a vegetarian dish for *Zen* monks in training according to Buddhist precepts. In places such as

Zen temples around the Nanzen-ji Zen Temple in Kyoto, there are still numerous restaurants where you can enjoy *yudofu* while viewing the gardens. Since Kyoto is blessed with high quality water, residents have long enjoyed *tofu* cuisine in harmony with the locally developed Buddhist culture. Unlike Edo (former name for Tokyo) where a variety of seafood was available as a protein source, Kyoto is surrounded by mountains. That may be another reason why *tofu* has always been treasured in Kyoto.

Kaiseki is a Japanese course meal for entertaining guests and enjoying tea. *Yudofu Kaiseki* is a meal served in a tea ceremony with *yudofu* taking center stage along with various *tofu* dishes such as *tofu dengaku* with sweet *miso* paste. A beautiful Japanese garden continuously changes its subtle expressions before you while you take delight in seasonal food full of colors. In such a serene moment, your heart will be filled with tranquility.



When *tofu* wobbles in hot water, it is ready to eat.



Dengaku is a dish of grilled *tofu* or *konnyaku* (konjak; also known as Devil's tongue) on skewers, spread with *miso* paste.





Historic Garden Towns Okayama

Text: Ishizuka Tokie
Photographs: Okayama Prefectural Tourism Federation, Yukio NAMBA,
Yumeji Art Museum Honkan, Manekineko Art Museum



Top: A statue of *Momotaro* stands in the plaza in front of Okayama Station. It is popular as a meeting point.
Right: Okayama Castle is known as the black castle, due to the black lacquer painted on the boards of its outer walls.



Known by the pleasant catchphrase “the Land of Sunshine,” Okayama is a castle town that harmoniously combines history and tradition with an abundance of nature, including Okayama Castle and Korakuen - one of Japan’s “Three Great Gardens.” It also sets the stage for the famous Japanese fairytale of *Momotaro* - the story of a boy born from a peach, who grew up to defeat demons.

The component structures of Okayama Castle were completed in 1615 and served as the residence for local *Daimyo* (feudal lords) throughout the Edo period (17th century - 19th century). The black-painted castle boasts an impressive exterior appearance and is also known as *Ujo* (Crow Castle). The top floor affords a sweeping view of Okayama City.

Korakuen is a vast garden built in 1700 by the local *Daimyo*. It has been designated a particularly valuable “special place of scenic beauty” - a classification with particularly high value that constitutes one type of Japan’s national cultural property. Within the gardens are the remains of Japanese structures such as the *Daimyo*’s living quarters and a *Noh* stage (traditional Japanese theater) which allow you to enjoy a Japanese ambiance from season to season, starting with the cherry blossoms in the spring, the lotus in the summer, the foliage in the fall, and the camellia in the winter. From spring to fall Korakuen is also open at night when you can enjoy a variety of events, including the garden’s illuminations. The red-crowned crane is an iconic bird of Japan, and eight of them have been bred in the gardens and add yet more beauty to the landscape from January to April when their red heads and white feathers are most vivid.



Spring. Korakuen is also a well-known venue for cherry blossoms. Every year it is packed with lots of visitors who come to view the blossoms.



Summer. *Ryuten* - a building that has a waterway passing through it - and fields of iris.



Fall. *Yuishinzan* Hill with its beautiful, vivid fall foliage.



Winter. The wonderful *Sawa-no-ike* Pond wrapped in snow.



Red-crowned cranes bred within the garden. Every year, for a limited period you can see them walking around the garden.



Takehisa Yumeji "Banshun" Property of the Yumeji Art Museum



Okayama city boasts many art galleries and museums featuring everything from the fine arts to toy collections. Yumeji Art Museum Honkan exhibits works by Takehisa Yumeji, an artist from Okayama city known for his lyrical paintings of beautiful women, and is famous for housing many original drawings. If you are lucky, you may be greeted by the popular black cat known as “*Kuro-no-suke*” - the guardian of the art museum’s garden. The sight of the cat, which looks just as if it has jumped out of one of Yumeji’s paintings, is sure to steal your heart.

If you are a cat lover, you should also head to the “*Manekineko*” (lucky, beckoning cat) Art Museum. This museum is located in an old, nostalgic Japanese house and exhibits as many as 700 of the popular *manekineko* – a talisman that is thought to bring prosperity in business. There are various kinds of *manekineko*, including those made of wood, paper and stone. On your way out you can even buy your favorite *manekineko* as a good-luck charm.

For transport you might want to take the cat-themed street car or bus. The bus, which links Okayama Station with Yumeji Art Museum and Korakuen, is covered with decals of the black cat *Kuro-no-suke* and you won’t be able to help but smile when you press the buzzer to get off and hear a “meowing” sound.

If you have time you may also like to visit the Kibi Highroad which crosses the Kibi Plateau. This is dotted with venues reminiscent of the legend of *Momotaro*. For example, there is Ki-no-jo (Demon’s Castle) which was built around the latter half of the 7th century and sits at an altitude of 500 meters. Here you can enjoy the refreshing air of the plateau. If you go to Kibitsujinja Shrine, its



Top: The corridor at the Kibitsu Shrine. You can relax and walk while viewing the scenery which changes with the season.
Right: Bicchu Matsuyama Castle is also called the “Mountain castle in the sky” as it seems to float in the air.



corridor that is some 400m long will no doubt refresh your mind; a walkway that has been designated as one of the prefecture’s important cultural properties. Furthermore, a hike to Bicchu Matsuyama Castle makes a perfect excursion. It is a fantastic sight when the whole area is wrapped in a sea of cloud (morning mist).

As you go around the sights in Okayama, you may want to buy some of the unique products that have the local feel and features of the region as souvenirs. The area is known as the birthplace of Japan’s first jeans and Kojima, in the nearby city of Kurashiki, is famous for its Okayama denim, which can also be bought in Okayama city; a denim that is popular worldwide for its delicate craftsmanship. In terms of food, Okayama’s specialty *kibi dango* (millet rice dumpling) are good and of course the delicious fruit for which Okayama is particularly well-known cannot be left out. The Shimizu White Peach is a type of peach that originates in Okayama. It is extremely sweet and is ranked number one in Japan in terms of production volume. The temperate climate of this Setouchi area also makes the region the number one producer of certain varieties of grape; with particular recommendations for the “Muscat of Alexandria” - the queen of grapes with an elegant bouquet and refreshing sweetness, and “Pione” - a seedless grape developed in Okayama. You may also want to sample other local cuisine such as sushi made using *mamakari* (Japanese sardines).



1. “Late Spring” by Takehisa Yumeji (1926). A woman and a cat drawn in the same pose.
2. The black cat *Kuro-no-suke* being held by the Deputy Director of the Yumeji Art Museum’s Honkan.
3. At the *Manekineko* Art Museum you are greeted by an array of lucky, beckoning cats. Said to be a museum that cat lovers cannot resist.



4. *Kibi dango* (millet rice dumpling)-famous as an item from *Momotaro*.
5. In Okayama you can enjoy the finest quality peaches and grapes.
6. Sushi made around Okayama that uses fish called *mamakari* (Japanese sardines). Delicious and refreshing.



You can have fun getting around on the bus, which is covered in decals of the black cat *Kuro-no-suke*.



Ki-no-jo Castle is one of Japan’s 100 most famous castles and also offers a great view.



Map of Okayama Area

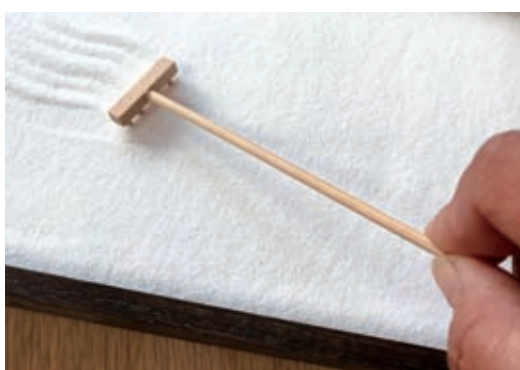
● Access

It takes approximately 80 minutes from Haneda Airport to Okayama Airport. And about 30 minutes by bus from Okayama Airport to the bus terminal at Okayama Station.

● Contact information

Momotaro Tourist Center
TEL. +81-86-222-2912
Okayama City Tourist Information Office 2F,
JR Okayama Station, 1-1 Ekimotomachi,
Kita-ku, Okayama City





Karesansui Kit (Japanese Dry Landscapes Kit)

Text: Ishizuka Tokio; Photo/Cooperation: Midori-ya - Nikogusa

Karesansui is a landscaping style that employs stones and sand to evoke scenes of hills and water. It has been developed under the influence of *Zen*, a Buddhist sect, since the Muromachi period (late 14th through 16th centuries). If you have ever seen and been affected by *karesansui*, this compact and easy-to-use kit may be an ideal souvenir purchase, enabling you to enjoy creating your own miniature *karesansui* at home.

Placement of rocks in your composition can bring to mind islands in the sea or mountains, allowing you the freedom to give shape to what you are feeling. In *karesansui* design, expressions of water play an important role.

This is manifested through patterns in the sand. There are many pattern possibilities; for example, surrounding rocks and curved lines to suggest certain types of water flow, such as that of a river.

In the paulownia (hardwood) tray, you can place sand and stones and use a rake to create patterns which will take your mind back to the stillness and the emotions that you experienced when visiting a *Zen* temple. From the patterns thus created, you can realize ocean waves or the flow of a river. We invite you to experience a vast and profound spiritual world encapsulated in a compact space typical of the Japanese culture of miniaturization.