

Springs of Tokaichiba and Natsugari

The water that feeds these springs originates on the slopes of Mt. Fuji 30 km away, arriving as snow or rain. Filtering through the layers of volcanic ash and pebbles, the water eventually reaches the impenetrable layer of volcanic rock formed from ancient eruptions. It travels along this layer for approximately 60 years before finally resurfacing here. This process produces supremely pure water which has been designated as one of Japan's best spring waters.

The farmers of Tsuru use these springs for agricultural purposes. The wasabi farm located at the base of the springs, for example, uses the constant flow to yield nearly three tons of produce each year. This water is also used to grow a unique local product called *mizukakena*, a mustard plant harvested in the middle of winter. This off-season harvest is possible because these plants are irrigated with the spring water, which maintains a constant 12°C even at the coldest times of the year, meaning the plants don't freeze.

Along the waterways fed by these springs grows *baikamo*, a species of ranunculus whose flowers resemble tiny plum blossoms. These beautiful plants prefer constantly flowing cool water, and therefore can only bloom in spring water like that found in the Tokaichiba and Natsugari areas of Tsuru.