

Climbing the steep stone stairs leading to the temple grounds will take your breath away, as will this mystical and picturesque building, which is surrounded by towering conifers. This ancient temple of the Soto School of Zen Buddhism, founded more than four centuries ago, is said to be the place of origin of the locally grown leaf vegetable Nozawana. Nozawana pickles, beloved for their slightly salty taste and crunchy texture, are rich in vitamin C. In 1756, the eighth head priest of Kenmeiji temple returned from Kyoto with Tennoji Kabura (a type of turnip) seeds. When the seeds were planted in Nozawa Onsen, they sprouted much bigger leaves and stems than their original variety did. Within the temple grounds there are still Nozawana fields left, and *teradane* (temple seeds) can be purchased as well.