

Entrance Hall (*Genkan no Ma*), Reception Room (*Zashiki*), and Garden (*Niwa*)

Interconnected on one side of the Shimizu Family House are the spaces used primarily for entertaining guests. Entering through the main door, one finds the formal entryway (*genkan*) and entrance hall (*genkan no ma*), followed by the main reception room (*zashiki*); this then leads into the garden (*niwa*).

Entrance Hall (*Genkan no Ma*)

In the *ashigaru* (foot soldiers) homes of the Kaga domain (feudal-era Ishikawa centered on Kanazawa), the *genkan no ma* was the space connected to the *genkan* where members of the household greeted guests and received messages. It was the custom for brief visits to be carried out in this space, without callers needing to step up into inner areas of the house. A *genkan* is still a fundamental part of Japanese homes today, and it is common practice to talk to neighbors or receive package deliveries in the *genkan*.

It is said that, in the Kaga domain during the Edo period (1603–1867), only individuals of the same rank would visit using the formal entrance, and then be invited into an *ashigaru* home. Samurai of higher rank would dispatch a messenger, who would relay his message in the *genkan* and then return. Merchants, servants, or other lower-class visitors would conduct their business via the side entrance. Hosting guests, therefore, was usually a relaxed social event among equals.

Reception Room (*Zashiki*)

This is where household members entertained their guests. On sunny days, the sliding doors could be opened to enjoy a view of the garden. Even on rainy days, the extra overhang of the veranda roof allowed the garden to be viewed while still providing protection from the elements.

As placement of the guest cushion shows, guests would sit at a slight distance from the hanging scroll, paintings, and display alcove (*tokonoma*). Currently, there is a scroll depicting Sugawara no Michizane (845–903) placed in the display alcove. Michizane was a renowned scholar, poet, and politician of the Heian period (794–1185). The founder and first domain lord (daimyo) of the Kaga domain, Maeda Toshiie (1538–1599), claimed to be Michizane's descendant.

Garden (*Niva*)

The garden was surrounded on all sides by hedges to separate it from neighboring plots, and it provided an aesthetically pleasing context for the house. It was not merely ornamental, however, but provided space to grow vegetables or cultivate fruit-bearing trees. As part of a system of self-sufficiency, *ashigaru* families often supplemented their diets with food they grew themselves.