

Demizu Stream

The network of streams that flow around the buildings and walls of the Kyoto Imperial Palace are known as Mikawa-mizu. The sight and sounds of the streams contribute to the atmosphere of peaceful refinement that pervades the gardens.

The Demizu Stream is a tiny brook that draws its water from the Mikawa-mizu. Just 5 cm deep and some 110 m long, its riverbed is covered with the same pebbles as the footpaths in the garden. Groundwater from a well is recycled and filtered to keep the stream flowing.

In the *Kokin wakashu* (905), one of the most famous and important collections of poetry in Japanese literary history, a poem by Sugano Takayo (early 9th century) describes the mesmerizing sight of blossoms floating past the Crown Prince's palace on the Mikawa-mizu stream. We can tell from this poem how much the people of the time loved the stream:

The petals of the cherry blossoms
so fleetingly fall
from the branches,
become the bubbles
of the flowing stream.

(Eda yori mo / adani chiri ni shi/ hana nareba/ ochite mo mizu no/ awa to koso nare)