

## Agatai Well

This well takes its name from the Agata no Miya Shrine, which was once located nearby. The name “Agatai” appears as early as the 10th century in two important works of literature, the famous *Tales of Yamato* (*Yamato-monogatari*) and the *Gosen wakashu*, the second anthology of poetry ever commissioned by a reigning emperor.

The composition of Japanese *waka* poetry played a central role in the cultural life of the nobles who lived in and around the palace. The Retired Emperor Gotoba (1180–1239) composed a poem on the elegance of this well and the beauty of the yellow kerria roses (*yamabuki*) that grew nearby:

As spring comes to an end,  
where the stream frogs sing  
by the Agatai well,  
they must be scattering now  
the lovely yellow blossoms of kerria.

(*kawazu naku / agata no ido ni / haru kurete / chiri ya shinuran / yamabuki no hana*)

(From the poetry collection *Shokugosen wakashu* (1251), No.155)