

Yogo no Matsu Sacred Pine Tree

The Yogo no Matsu is a sacred pine tree located just beyond the first torii gate. The original pine tree is depicted in the *Kasuga Gongen Genki*, a famous picture scroll that was dedicated to Kasuga Taisha Shrine in 1309.

According to legend, the deities of Kasuga Taisha Shrine descended to earth via pine trees. Since then, the pine has been considered a sacred tree. During the annual Kasuga Wakamiya Onmatsuri Festival, ancient performing arts and special ceremonies are held in front of the pine tree.

This tree served as the model for the pine trees painted as the backdrop on Noh stages all across Japan.

Noh is one of the oldest performing arts in the world, dating back more than 600 years. Noh performances incorporate chant, dance, and drama, and the main performers wear stylized masks.

Descendants of the Yogo no Matsu have replaced the original tree many times over the centuries, and the next generation is growing in close proximity to the old pine.