

Yoryu Kannon Hall

This hall is named after the Yoryu, or Willow Kannon, that is enshrined here. The figure is one of many manifestations of Kannon, the bodhisattva of compassion. This Kannon holds a willow branch, which is said to both cure and ward off illness. Interestingly, the leaves and bark of the weeping willow contain salicylic acid, which has several medicinal properties and was used in the early manufacture of aspirin.

People come to this hall to pray for a safe and easy childbirth. The wooden blocks in front of the building look like one of the pieces in Japanese chess (*shogi*). Like the rook in Western chess, this piece can only move in a straight line. The wooden blocks were placed here in the hope for an uncomplicated delivery and a successful life for the child.

The carvings on the building are references to marriage and parenthood. A pair of Mandarin ducks are featured over the doors, and on each side of the building are male and female birds of paradise. Mandarin ducks and birds of paradise are known for monogamy and symbolize couples and parenting.

The placement of a Shinto torii in front of a hall that enshrines a Buddhist deity is quite unusual and is a reminder of the days when the syncretic practice of Shinto and Buddhism was common in Japan.