

## The Five Seasons of Saihoji Temple

### Spring

When the weeping cherry trees in front of the main hall are in full bloom, the surrounding area becomes even more beautiful. Kingfishers calling at the edge of the pond. After the blossoms scatter, the greenery grows deep and rich and the azaleas bloom, opening up a completely different world. The Moss Garden basks in the joy and warmth of spring.

### Rainy Season

The grounds of Saihoji Temple, which are blanketed in more than 120 species of moss, grow greener with each rainfall. The moss is renewed, and visitors experience a feeling of peace. The lotus in the pond in front of the main hall are a heritage variety known as Oga lotus, which dates back to the prehistoric Jomon period (c. 10,000–c. 300 BCE). The season shifts to summer, when the greenery of the trees deepens.

### Summer

The cicadas announce the height of summer with their cries. Gentle breezes bring relief from the heat. In the garden, crepe myrtle flowers bloom from midsummer. The moss may dry and crack in harsh sunlight, but it does not die—it is only waiting for the next rainfall. A garden enduring the summer heat can tell us a lot about the resilience of nature.

### Autumn

The fragrance of osmanthus announces the arrival of cooler days of autumn. Under clear skies, the temple foliage gradually changes color. The contrast of moss green and autumn leaves is extraordinary, especially at the height of the season.

### Winter

The gardens are closed to visitors from mid-January to early March. The moss remains green throughout the winter, but the trees are bare. The grounds are swept as little as possible, so as not to disturb the moss's dormant period. Over the winter, as the temperatures rise, the moss begins to grow again, and the lunar new year arrives as Japanese bush warblers (*uguisu*) herald the spring.