

Udun Palace

The one-story Udun is technically a palace, but in size and features it can be better described as a large rural villa. With 15 rooms in all, it has formal reception spaces with the best views of the garden pond, with rooms in the rear for residential functions such as sleeping, dressing, cooking, and bathing, all typical of a fine private home. The natural *inumaki* wood finish on both the interior and exterior is typical of Ryukyuan folk houses, as are the large hinged shutters, called *haneage-do*, that swing upward to allow light and breeze while providing shade, and the red tile roof with white plaster decoration. Many aspects of the interior are Japanese in origin, such as the tatami mats of woven rush, sliding interior shoji screens of translucent washi paper, decorative tokonoma niches along the walls of important rooms, and the visible, ornamental structural framework.

Udun Palace was expanded twice in early twentieth century and is now composed of several freely laid-out wings connected by cool, wooden-floored corridors. Intimate interior gardens bring in light and breeze. The Udun and other buildings at Shikinaen are built from *inumaki* wood, also known as *chagi*. This sturdy, hard species twists as it grows, and the outer columns under the eaves of the palace were used in a natural state that shows this to advantage. The root end of the tree is believed to be more resistant to water, so that end is placed on foundation stones set into the ground. *Inumaki* has become scarce in Okinawa, so this wood was imported from Kyushu when Udun Palace was restored in 1992.