

### ***Himeshara* Grove**

More than 100 *himeshara* (Tall stewartia, *Stewartia monadelphica*) trees can be seen reaching for the sky on the steep hillside behind Hakone Shrine. They form a dense grove that lets in only slivers of sunlight in summer and turns a beautiful shade of auburn in autumn. Small white flowers appear on the branches from late May to June, but their distance from the ground means they can be hard to spot without binoculars. The distinctive trunks are easier to notice: smooth and light brown, the bark feels slippery to the touch. Though the *himeshara* is not uncommon in the region around Hakone, here it grows wild and in great numbers. The grove, a designated Natural Monument of Kanagawa Prefecture (of which Hakone is part), can be reached by either walking up the hill from Hakone Shrine or entering the precincts by taking the back entrance, marked by a small red torii gate just off Route 75.