

Bonsai Display Rooms (*Zashiki-kazari*)

The Omiya Bonsai Art Museum is home to the world's only dedicated exhibit showing how bonsai are displayed in three types of tatami-floored rooms traditionally used for entertaining guests in Japan. These interior styles and their associated modes of decoration, together known as *zashiki-kazari*, were inspired by Chinese calligraphy scrolls and formalized, according to social function, in the Muromachi period (1336–1573). By the late Edo period (1603–1868), during which time Chinese-style tea culture became popular, bonsai were incorporated into each style of room. Each type is authentically recreated at the museum, and although visitors are not allowed to cross the threshold into the rooms themselves, it is easy for them to imagine sitting inside on the tatami.

Bonsai were later additions to existing modes of interior decoration, but came to be their focal point or aesthetic anchor around which other items placed in the *tokonoma* alcove, such as hanging scrolls and mountain-like *suiseki* stones, are harmonized. From left to right, the three *zashiki-kazari* rooms are in the middle-ranked *gyo* style, which is the most common type of Japanese room seen today; the *so* style designed mainly for informal serving of tea; and the *shin* style, the most formal and intended for guests of high social status. As in the Collection Gallery, the bonsai displayed here are changed weekly.