

South Garden (Minami Shin'en)

The South Garden, or Minami Shin'en, is a classic stroll garden designed in the style of the Heian period (794–1185). The stroll begins with a copse of cherry trees. The double-petaled weeping cherry called *yaebeni shidare* flowers here in mid-April. The clusters of blooms are of a much deeper shade of pink than the *somei yoshino* cherry species, which is the most popular cherry tree in Japan.

Many of the plants and flowers in this garden have been selected because they feature in famous literary works and classical poetry of the Heian period. There is no set course to follow through the garden, as the paths of stroll gardens are designed for meandering. The plants and trees are planted close together to create enclosed spaces and a small stream flows through its grounds. In the Heian period, members of the nobility would have spent time in such gardens for artistic inspiration, to ponder, relax, or talk intimately with guests.