

East Garden (Higashi Shin'en)

The East Garden, or Higashi Shin'en, is the third of the Heian Jingu gardens designed by Ogawa Jihei VII, master gardener of the Meiji era (1868–1912), who was known for his skillful use of rocks and water. It is the largest of the four gardens and features elegant wooden structures, such as the Taiheikaku, originally built on the grounds of the Kyoto Imperial Palace (Kyoto Gosho).

This garden is inspired by daimyo gardens of the Edo period (1603–1867). Daimyo were the lords of local domains of the Edo period, and their gardens were large in scale and incorporated teahouses and other structures from which to view the garden. The daimyo gardens were symbols of their cultural sophistication and wealth.

The East Garden is built around a large pond and “borrows” scenery from outside the garden to enhance the impression of scale. Beyond the Taiheikaku, the roofed walkway over the pond, is a mountain in the background. This “borrowed scenery” is one of the features of Japanese landscaping.

The paths around the pond are lined with cherry trees, and some double-petaled weeping cherries grow over the water's edge. Flowers in the garden include wisteria, azalea, and the Asiatic dayflower (*tsuyukusa*; *Commelina communis*), a plant that blooms with delicate blue petals for a single day each year in July.

The East Garden and other gardens at Heian Jingu are popular with many types of birds, including herons, kingfishers, Japanese white-eye warblers (*mejiro*), and great tits.