

Shinjiike Pond

A *shinjiike*, or “heart character pond,” is a common element of Japanese gardens and can be seen at many of Kyoto’s temples, including at neighboring Nanzenji Temple. The name refers to the pond’s shape, which loosely resembles a cursive form of the Chinese character *shin*, meaning “heart,” “spirit,” or “center.” This type of pond is believed to have been popularized by Musō Soseki (1275–1351), a Zen monk of the Rinzai school, founder of many temples, and former abbot of Nanzenji Temple. The *shinjiike* invites contemplation and reflection through both its meaning and its placement—next to the Kohōjō, where the abbot’s quarters are located.