

## Yoshimizu-en Garden

Yoshimizu-en is a private garden built in 1781 by Sasaki Hachiemonmasato. He was the 16th head of the Kake Sumiya, a prominent local family that made a fortune in the iron industry.

Sasaki built Yoshimizu-en Garden as a mountain retreat, as he enjoyed the landscape and terrain of the surrounding Kake area. The circular garden has a pond in the middle and is designed so that visitors can stroll around and appreciate the beautifully curated garden. At the back of the garden is Yoshimizu-tei, a small house built in 1782, which supports a tatami mezzanine floor with a fine view of the garden. Looking out from the mezzanine, one can see a forest to the right, and the Ota River and a mountain range on the horizon. The garden today is the result of remodeling that was done from 1788 to 1807 by renowned Kyoto landscape gardener Shimizu Shichiroemon.

Yoshimizu-en is still used by the Kake Sumiya family for welcoming guests, but is open to the public for four days in early summer and four days in fall. In June, visitors have the rare opportunity to observe local forest tree frogs (*moriao-gaeru*), which lay their eggs in trees near bodies of water. From early May to late June, the frogs gather on tree branches that extend out over the garden's pond. One female is usually mounted by several males, who compete to fertilize her eggs as she lays them. About 300 eggs are laid in a white foam sac that is produced by the frogs and which is stuck to a branch. About a week later the foam sac disintegrates, dropping the newly hatched tadpoles into the water below. After about another two months, the young frogs emerge from the water and make their way into their natural forest habitat, where they cling to tree branches and leaves. The forest tree frogs of Yoshimizu-en are a designated Natural Monument of Hiroshima Prefecture. In November, the garden is open to showcase its maple trees, which date back to the Edo period (1603–1868) and fill the garden with color every autumn.