

## **Autumn Leaves**

In autumn, the hillsides of Shiobara are ablaze with the vibrant colors of more than 20 different tree species. During the warmer months, all plants produce large amounts of chlorophyll, a green pigment that is necessary for photosynthesis—the process by which plants convert sunlight into food. Leaves produce other pigments as well, including red and yellow, but these are masked by the chlorophyll in spring and summer. When the sunlight weakens and the days grow short, the chlorophyll starts to break down, and the dazzling colors of autumn are revealed. The timing and intensity of the fall foliage is the result of various environmental factors including temperature, light, and water.