

## **Kusunoki Masashige Statue**

The solid bronze statue of Kusunoki Masashige (1294–1336), a samurai remembered for his deep loyalty to his emperor, dominates Kokyo Gaien's National Garden Plaza.

Kusunoki is remembered for having sacrificed his life to serve Emperor Go-Daigo (1288–1339). Kusunoki's strategic brilliance had helped the emperor overthrow the Kamakura shogunate and briefly restore power to the imperial house. Go-Daigo was betrayed by a treasonous general and ordered Kusunoki into battle against a much larger army. Kusunoki urged him to reconsider, predicting he would lose. The battle was a tactical disaster. Rather than be captured, Kusunoki performed seppuku, a ritual suicide committed by samurai to die with honor.

The statue depicts Kusunoki awaiting the return of Emperor Go-Daigo from the Oki Islands in the Sea of Japan, where the emperor had been exiled when his first attempt to destroy the Kamakura shogunate failed in 1331.