

Kongō Cherry Tree

This cherry tree was already more than 400 years old when it was moved here in 1881. Hikosaka Jinkō (1833–1897), the abbot of Rinnōji Temple, decided to move the tree from a nearby location to stand in front of the Sanbutsudō. The Sanbutsudō, or *hondō* (main hall), had recently been moved here following the government-mandated separation of Shinto and Buddhism that began in 1868. The abbot chose the tree for its size and stately appearance.

Jinkō and others were worried that the tree would not survive the move, and so every morning Jinkō chanted sutras in front of it. Soon the tree began to thrive, and four new trunks sprouted from the base.

The tree was named after Jinkō's posthumous dharma name, Kongō Shin-in. *Kongō* is a Buddhist term meaning “diamond” or “vajra” and suggests indomitability and stubbornness.

The Kongō Cherry Tree is thought to be a unique, hybrid cultivar of ornamental cherry. The thick clusters of large, white flowers bloom in late April to early May. It is designated a Natural Monument.