

## **Ninnaji Flower Festival**

The grounds of Ninnaji show their most colorful side in spring, when trees and bushes held dear for centuries by people in Kyoto burst into bloom. The Ninnaji Flower Festival usually takes place from mid-March to early May and centers on the blossoming of the Omuro Sakura, a family of cherry trees notable for large flowers with a sweet scent. Planted in hard soil to keep the trees low—a deliberate aesthetic choice—the Omuro Sakura come in several varieties. The most common of these is the Omuro Ariake, which produces white, cloud-like blossoms.

Omuro Sakura have been renowned since the Edo period (1603–1868), when Ninnaji first opened its grounds to the public during cherry-blossom viewing (*hanami*) season, and they still attract large crowds every spring. They usually reach full bloom in mid-April, when azaleas add shades of pink and light purple to the scenery. Toward the end of the festival period, maple trees provide a bright green backdrop to the flowers. There is a ¥500 admission fee to the temple grounds during the Flower Festival.