

## **Hiruzen Herb Garden Herbill**

Perched on a hillside with views overlooking the lush Hiruzen Highlands beneath the triple peaks of the Hiruzen Sanza, this elegant botanical showplace exhibits the beauty and creativity that can be achieved in carefully tended landscapes.

### **Gardens**

The picturesque herb garden, styled after a traditional English garden, features around 200 species of plants. Visitors are encouraged to explore with all of their senses, taking in not only the skillful visual arrangements but also the varied textures and fragrances of the herbs. Something is always in flower from April through October, but in June the garden reaches its height as roses bloom in a kaleidoscope of colors and scents. Designed and built entirely by the owner, the English garden contains neat, mulched pathways through leafy trellises, benches surrounded by fragrant blossoms, and a petite stone cottage for a shady retreat.

Behind the herb garden, the southwestern hillside is covered with 10,000 lavender plants—the largest lavender field in western Japan. Their purple flowers perfume the air in July, when Herbill holds its lavender harvest festival. Herbill grows several kinds of lavender, but the majority is an English variety called “Dream.” Visitors can cut their own lavender to take home and also learn how to preserve it. Bordering the lavender fields is a blueberry patch planted with Northern Highbush varieties that can withstand the region’s chill winters. Each July, when the berries ripen, visitors can pay to pick and eat them as they stroll through the gardens. In winter, this same slope makes for excellent sledding.

While the tidy rows and lovingly tended flowerbeds are a model of cultivation, these gardens are surrounded by nature—and attract plenty of local wildlife. Keen-eyed visitors will spot excavations left by foraging Japanese badgers, known in Japan by the apt name of *anaguma*, or “hole bears.” In the trees above the irrigation pond, forest green tree frogs suspend their foam-like egg masses from branches, keeping a wary eye out for Japanese striped snakes on the hunt. And of course, flocks of birds and butterflies come to sample the ocean of flowers.

### **Restaurant**

The first floor of the airy central building houses a popular restaurant and café. Dishes are made from local produce and accented with herbs and edible flowers grown on-site. Afternoon tea—with homemade scones and clotted cream made from local Jersey milk—is a local favorite. Also served are cakes and a colorful variety of homemade herbal teas, which are available for purchase in the attached shop. Alongside staples like lemongrass and mint, there are creative blends such as a bright-blue mallow tea that turns pink with the addition of the house lemon syrup.

Diners can choose seating in the glass-walled dining room or on the pet-friendly terrace, where umbrella-shaded tables have a view that stretches across the Hiruzen Basin to the mountains collectively known as the “three peaks of Hiruzen,” or Hiruzen Sanza. Lush grasslands on their slopes offer abundant grazing land for Hiruzen’s famed Jersey cattle,

while forests of oak and beech higher up reflect the brilliant colors of passing seasons. The terrace's elevation makes this one of the best scenic overlooks in the region.

**Craft Room**

On the cozy second floor, beneath bunches of lavender and hydrangea hung to dry in the exposed rafters, there is a studio offering drop-in workshops in making arrangements with dried and preserved flowers. The materials are available in preselected sets, or visitors may choose their own assortment from a vast selection, some grown on-site.