

## Maruyama Inari Shrine

Maruyama Inari is the oldest shrine on the Tsurugaoka Hachimangu grounds. The Shinto deity of rice, agriculture, and prosperity, Inari is enshrined here. The Inari deity has been venerated in this area since before Tsurugaoka Hachimangu was founded in 1180. The shrine is guarded by two stone foxes, which are considered messengers of Inari. Red banners surround the shrine, and like the bright red torii gates that line the paths, were dedicated to Inari by local worshipers to pray for success in business or a plentiful harvest.

Maruyama (round mountain), the hill the shrine stands on, was constructed with gravel and rocks taken from the mountainside when the Main Shrine was built in 1191. The Maruyama Inari shrine building is the oldest surviving structure at Tsurugaoka Hachimangu and dates back to the Muromachi period (1336–1573). It is designated an Important Cultural Property.

The Hitaki-sai fire festival is held at Maruyama Inari every year on November 8. The event includes Kamakura *kagura*, a dramatic combination of **ritual** and dance that originated in the Kamakura period (1185–1333) and is performed to pray for a bountiful harvest in the coming year.