

Tea Plantation

Okayama Korakuen's tea plantation has been a key component and mainstay of the garden since its beginnings. The tea plants cultivated here have not undergone selective breeding and have maintained their original taste for four centuries. During the Edo period (1603–1867), the daimyo lords would often enjoy the slightly bitter flavor of the tea made with leaves plucked and prepared from these plants.

The plantation originally consisted of scattered tea plants, but was organized in beautifully manicured rows in the Taisho era (1912–1926). The current arrangement is harmonized with the hedges on the embankment behind them, which are trimmed in elegant, wave-like lines resembling mountains behind the garden. The tea plantation has played an important role at Korakuen, both in producing tea that is made for daily consumption in the garden and in replicating a typical rural scene within the garden.

The Tea Picking Festival takes place in the garden on the third Sunday of May and visitors can join in and help harvest tea leaves. An annual event since 1956, the festival features members of the Tea Picking Dance Preservation Society from Mimasaka—a city in Okayama Prefecture famed for its tea—harvesting tea leaves and performing a tea-picking dance performed in traditional Japanese farming kimono.

Located next to the tea plantation is a tea house cafe where visitors can enjoy the view of Okayama castle and Sawanoike Pond.