

Preeminent Pines

As pine trees represent longevity in Japan, it is fitting that the 400-year-old Ritsurin Garden is abound with nearly 1,400 of them. Among the approximately 1,000 trees that are tended to regularly by the resident gardeners, several were planted by members of the imperial family and one by Edward VIII (1894–1972), former monarch of the United Kingdom, who visited the garden as crown prince in 1922. More famous, however, are the “three great pines” of Ritsurin Garden: Tsurukamematsu, Hakomatsu, and Neagari Goyomatsu. Tsurukamematsu (“crane and turtle pine”) is a Japanese black pine named after its shape, which is thought to resemble a crane standing on the back of a turtle—a mound shaped out of more than 100 stones. It is located near the Commerce and Industry Promotion Hall in the central part of the garden. South of the Tsurukamematsu stands the Hakomatsu (“box pine”), a row of interlinking trees that when seen together from a distance appear to form the shape of a long, thin box. Last but not least is the Neagari Goyomatsu, which grows next to the Kikugetsutei teahouse. Approximately 8 meters tall, it was originally a bonsai tree presented to the daimyo lord of the Takamatsu domain in 1833 by Tokugawa Ienari (1773–1841), the head of the shogunate that ruled Japan until 1867. The daimyo had the pine taken out of its pot and planted in his garden, where it grew to an impressive size. It is the only Japanese white pine (*goyomatsu*) in Ritsurin Garden.