

Takamatsu Bonsai no Sato

The city of Takamatsu is the leading producer of bonsai in Japan, growing roughly 80 percent of the country's miniature pines. The Kokubunji and neighboring Kinashi neighborhoods are particularly renowned for these potted trees, which are grown at the approximately 60 bonsai gardens or nurseries that operate in the area. Some of these have been in business since the early nineteenth century, when local growers started making bonsai using the Japanese black pines that were extremely common along the shores and on the islands of the Seto Inland Sea.

The artisans of Takamatsu made use of botanical knowledge and pruning skills acquired in fruit farming, which has deep roots in the area, and developed bonsai-growing into an industry in its own right. Until the end of the Edo period in 1867, bonsai was a hobby practiced mainly by the nobility and high-ranking samurai, but it gained widespread popularity from the turn of the century onward. Rapid economic growth after World War II provided another boost, and the bonsai industry of Takamatsu flourished. All this was made possible by the local climate, which is relatively warm. Combined with low rainfall, the city is the ideal place to grow sturdy pines.

Takamatsu Bonsai no Sato in Kokubunji is a facility where visitors can learn more about the art of growing and cultivating bonsai. It offers a variety of workshops and classes for this purpose, but is more famous for its market, which attracts bonsai professionals from throughout Japan. More than 40 of Takamatsu's bonsai nurseries sell their products at the market, where prospective buyers can choose from some 10,000 trees. Smaller specimens have been growing for 10 to 15 years, while the larger have been skillfully shaped for as many as 40 years at a nursery before going on sale.