

Udo Shrine: *Nade-usagi*

The *nade-usagi* (“rubbing rabbit”) is the most prominent of the many rabbit statues on the grounds of Udo Shrine. The rabbit is believed to be the messenger of Ugayafukiaezu, the shrine’s primary deity, and the *nade-usagi* is thought to be imbued with the deity’s powers of healing. Devotees with physical ailments can leave a small donation in the offertory box, then rub the part of the figurine that corresponds to the body part they hope to cure. This type of healing statue has been a feature of many Shinto shrines and some Buddhist temples in Japan since at least the Edo period (1603–1867). It is most commonly in the shape of a cow, but can also be other animals or an image of Buddha.