

Kannon-numa Forest Park

Kannon-numa Forest Park is most famous for its stunning fall foliage, but is a peaceful oasis in any season. The focus of the park is the Kannon-numa Marsh. An easy 1.2 km walking trail suitable for all ages and abilities circles the marsh. Several outlooks afford panoramas of the marsh, which has a number of islands, and benches are provided here and there along the walks. Eight other trails thread through the surrounding woods and around the marsh.

A wide variety of plants and flowers can be seen from early spring to late summer. After the last winter snow melts away, the white trumpet-shaped flowers of *mizubasho* (Asian skunk cabbage) herald the coming of spring. Soon after come the many different types of cherry trees, including the *shidare-zakura* (weeping cherry tree) and *yae-zakura* (late-blooming double varieties), between April and May. Japanese honeysuckle, azaleas, and hydrangeas are some of the flowers that bloom into the summer months.

Dake Kannondo is a small temple in the park noted for its fine wood carvings. It is dedicated to Kannon, the bodhisattva of compassion from whom the marsh is thought to take its name. The temple was built on the orders of Sakanoue Tamuramaro (758–811), a powerful warrior of the Heian period (794–1185), to honor the men and horses that fell in a battle waged nearby.