

Rokube Yew Tree

The 12-meter-tall Japanese yew tree (*ichii*; *Taxus cuspidata*) on the grounds of the Rokube House in the village of Hirase stands on high ground some distance from the Sho River. The tree is thought to have been planted some 200 years ago in the garden of one of the oldest families in Hirase and marks the original site of a village that archaeological findings indicate has been inhabited since prehistoric times. Hirase now extends all the way down to the river, having expanded rapidly from the early twentieth century onward after a mine and then a hydropower plant were opened nearby.

The Japanese yew is relatively common in old gardens in Shirakawa. It grows very slowly, but the wood is comparatively soft and easy to carve. It has traditionally been used as material for ornamental carving in the area covered by present-day Gifu Prefecture.