

## **The Weeping Chestnut Trees of Takehara**

Roughly 80 chestnut trees grow on a hillside in the Takehara area, south of the town of Gero. The trees are unusual for their contorted, drooping branches. Their weeping form was originally the result of a mutation, and the trees propagated naturally. The oldest is believed to be around 300 years old.

It is said that there are only three or four such groves of naturally propagated weeping chestnut trees in Japan. These include sites in neighboring Nagano Prefecture and in Fukushima Prefecture in the northeastern region of Tohoku. The chestnut trees of Takehara are beautiful throughout the year. In spring, they bloom with pink flowers; in winter, the bare branches reveal their sculptural forms.