

## Flowers in Omura Park

Foliage and seasonal flowers throughout Omura Park frame views of the site of Kushima Castle. Several rare varieties of cherry blossom have been identified in the park, and thousands of irises bloom in the castle moats in late spring.

Omura Park encompasses the former grounds of Kushima Castle, a sixteenth-century fortress built by the Omura family that governed the Omura domain. The castle was razed in the late nineteenth century, after political power was restored to the emperor and the shogunate was abolished, after which the grounds were redeveloped and opened as Omura Park.

### *Rare cherry blossoms*

There are around 2,000 cherry trees in Omura Park, including some of the Omura-zakura (*Cerasus serrulata* ‘Mirabilis’) and Kushima-zakura (*Cerasus serrulate* ‘Kusimana’) varieties. Both are rare, double-petaled varieties first identified in the 1940s when they were discovered in the park. The Omura and Kushima trees typically reach full bloom from early to mid-April, later than the more widespread Somei Yoshino cherry trees, famed for their pale single-petaled blooms.

### *Iris moats*

In late spring, the inner moats of Kushima Castle bloom with around 300,000 irises of 171 different varieties of Japanese iris (*Iris ensata*). The largest display of irises in western Japan, the flowers bloom across an area of around 9,500 square meters. They typically bloom from late May until early June.

### *Omura Flower Festival*

Night illuminations during the Omura Flower Festival allow visitors to enjoy the park in a different light during spring and early summer. The festival runs from late March as the cherry blossoms and azaleas open, until late June, when the hydrangeas begin to fade. Cherry, azalea, wisteria, and hydrangea flowers bloom in sequence during the festival, adding color to the former castle site.

*When to see the flowers in Omura Park:*

Somei Yoshino flowering cherry: Late March to early April

Omura-zakura flowering cherry: Early to mid-April

Kushima-zakura flowering cherry: Early to mid-April

Wisteria: Mid- to late April

Azalea: Mid-April to early May

Alpine rose: Mid-April to early May

Japanese iris: Late May to early June

Hydrangea: Early to mid-June