



Kusatsu Aquatic Botanical Garden





Kusatsu

Aquatic

Botanical

Garden

Mizunomori:

An

Overview



A world of lotuses and water lilies

Kusatsu Aquatic Botanical Garden Mizunomori opened in 1996. It sits on the southeastern shore of Lake Biwa on a small peninsula it shares with the Lake Biwa Museum, a natural history museum that opened at the same time. The botanical garden's principal feature is one of Japan's largest collections of lotus plants (*hasu*) and water lilies (*suiren*). This focus derives from the presence of a 13-hectare lotus patch that flourished in the lake next to the facility until 2016, when it mysteriously vanished.

Mizunomori, as the garden is commonly known, attracts over

100,000 visitors per year. It is busiest in June and July, when the lotuses and water lilies are in flower, though there are aquatic plants to see all year round. The botanical garden has 150 varieties of water lilies, both temperate and tropical, and 100 varieties of lotus, an iconic flower in Japan. A visit to Mizunomori presents a great opportunity to get to know this flower, which occupies a significant place in Japanese culture.

The facility consists of one large building, the Lotus Pavilion, and the surrounding ponds and gardens. The pavilion houses several attractions: a theater that shows a 15-minute video on lotuses and water lilies; exhibits



on the lotus' s significance in science and culture; a greenhouse where tropical water lilies bloom year-round; an outdoor terrace with a small lotus pond attached; and a cafeteria with panoramic views over the garden and lake.

The outdoor section of the museum features multiple gardens. Seasonal flowers are displayed in the Community Square outside the Lotus Pavilion. The Teaching Garden has two long tanks full of lotus flowers.

Hanakage Pond is a water lily pond inspired by the garden of Impressionist painter Claude Monet (1840–1926) at Giverny in France. The Wetland Garden highlights Japanese irises and





autumnal grasses, while the Volunteer Garden, which is cultivated by volunteer amateur gardeners, is closer to a typical English garden.



Visitors should plan on spending at least one to one-and-a-half hours to see everything at Mizunomori. Access is either by car or by bus from the west exit of JR Kusatsu Station.



The Lotus Pavilion and Atrium Greenhouse

Recreating a tropical environment

The Atrium greenhouse features four ponds where roughly 30 varieties of tropical water lilies (*Nymphaea*) are on display at any given time. Since tropical water lilies cannot survive Japan's winters, they are kept in a greenhouse, where the temperature is maintained at no less than 20 degrees Celsius and the water at a year-round 28 degrees Celsius.

A slope around the ponds enables observation of the water lilies first from above and then at eye level from the opposite side. Notice that the water lilies' leaves lie flat on the water and have a V-shaped



cleft where the stem attaches. The flowers, which bloom in vibrant colors and have pointed petals, float on the water's surface.

Immediately outside the greenhouse is a terrace that overlooks a small pond with some 100 pots of lotus plants (*Nelumbo*). Compared to the water lily, the lotus has bigger, more rounded leaves that sit above the water, as does the flower, which blooms around 1.5 meters above the surface. The flowers, which are white, pink, yellow, or pink and white, are paler than the lily flowers.

Back at the greenhouse, look for the three sacred trees of

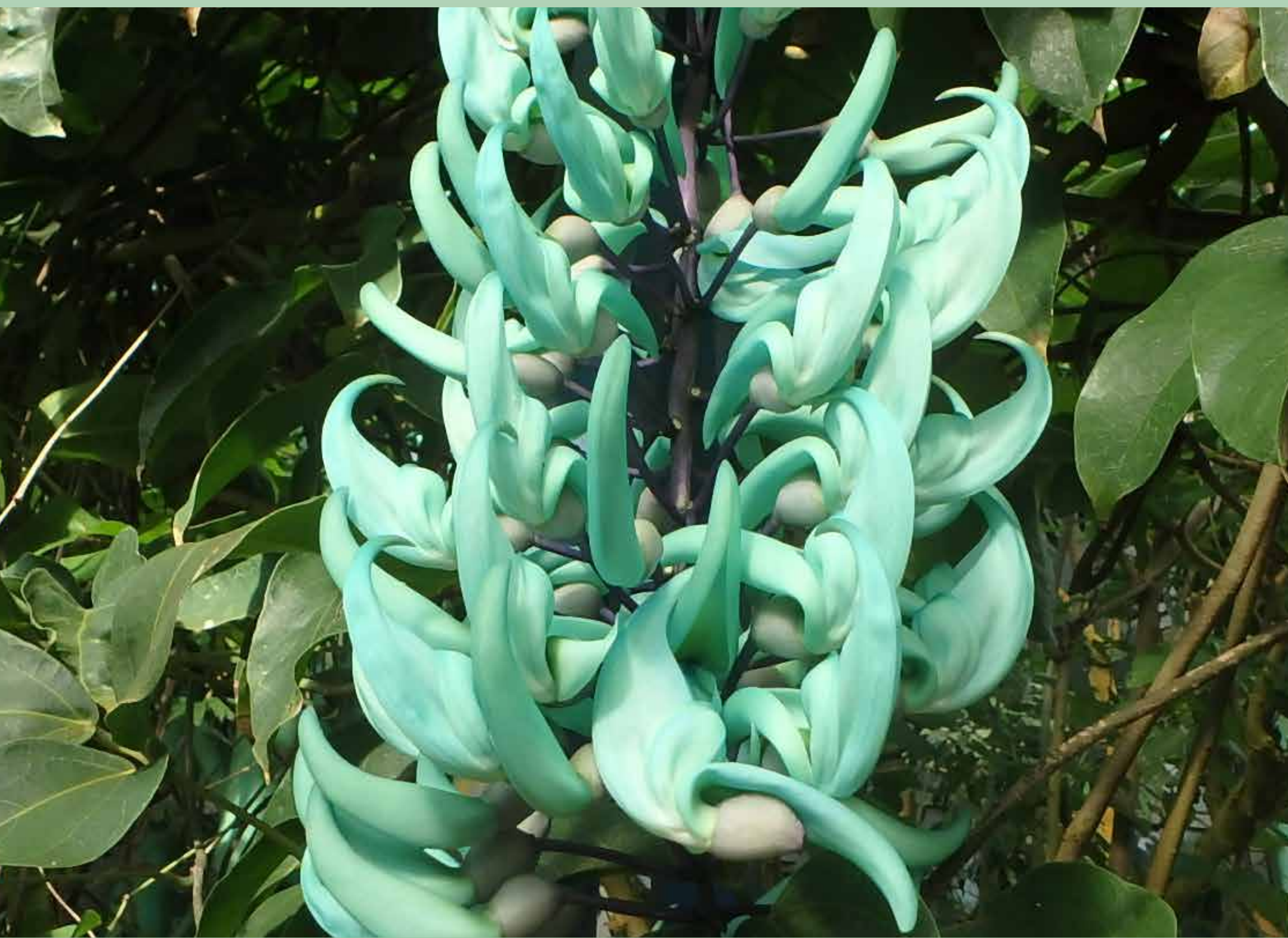


Buddhism: the ashoka tree (*Saraca asoca*), under which the Buddha was born; the bodhi tree (*Ficus religiosa*), under which he achieved enlightenment; and the sal tree (*Shorea robusta*), under which he died. (Incidentally, the Buddha is frequently represented sitting on a lotus pedestal. In Buddhism, the lotus symbolizes spiritual purity, as it blooms clean and white though its roots are in the mud at the bottom of the pond, while its short four-day lifespan also evokes the transience of human existence.)



Though the garden mainly features aquatic plants, the greenhouse contains a small cactus corner. The golden barrel cactus (*Echinocactus grusonii*) here is over 50 years old. The oversized star-shaped flower of the carrion plant (*Stapelia gigantea*) appears in June and gives off the smell of rotting flesh.

Another eccentric-looking plant is the turquoise jade vine (*Strongylodon macrobotrys*), native to the Philippines. It produces chains of green-blue claw-shaped flowers in March and April.



A small aquarium at Mizunomori reproduces the shallow-water ecosystem of Lake Biwa. It contains shining pondweed (*Potamogeton dentatus*), an endangered submerged perennial plant now extinct in Lake Biwa, and nejiremo (*Vallisneria asiatica* var. *biwaensis*), a waterweed with ribbon-like spiraling leaves that is threatened by eutrophication and invasive plant species.

The lotus in culture and science

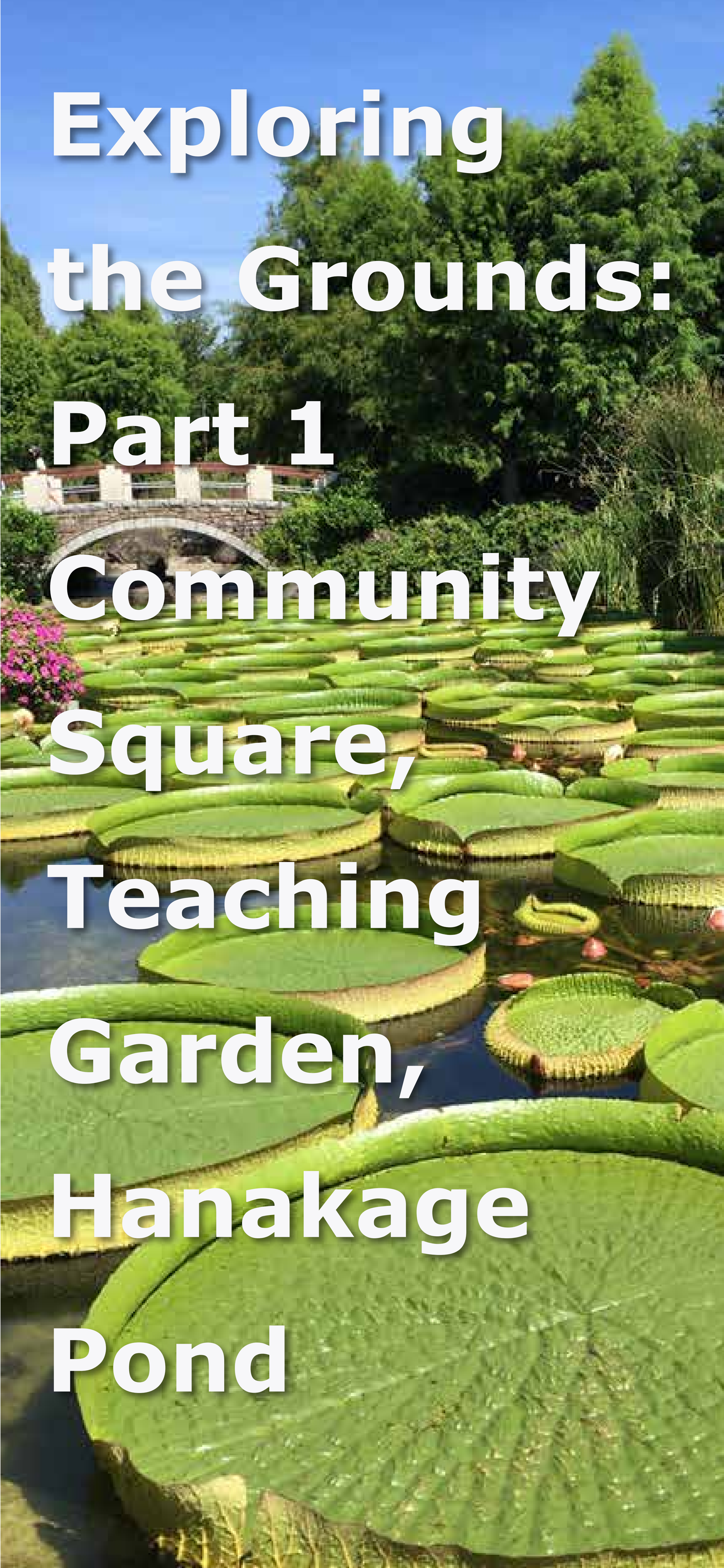
Two exhibition rooms adjoining the Atrium greenhouse focus



on the historical importance of the lotus as a religious and decorative motif, with examples ranging from ancient Egyptian sculptures to a Tiffany lamp from the early twentieth century. A large model of a lotus shows all the details of the plant, down to the roots.

In the break room by the front door of the Lotus Pavilion is a Yamasaki Kazura (*Epipremnum amplissimum*), native to the Philippines and one of only two examples of the plant to flower in Japan. This one blooms in April and May, producing an unusual-looking flower that resembles a ripe banana.





**Exploring
the Grounds:
Part 1
Community
Square,
Teaching
Garden,
Hanakage
Pond**

Community Square

A tour of the Mizunomori grounds usually starts at the Community Square in front of the Lotus Pavilion. Seasonal flowers adorn the square in pots and hanging baskets. These flowers range from delphiniums in May to cascade chrysanthemums (*kengaigiku*) in November to “ice tulips,” grown from refrigerated bulbs, in December. During summer, lotus flowers in pots are arranged around the fountain. Dedicated areas feature pygmy water lilies (*Nymphaea tetragona*) and tropical water lilies, placed so you can smell the flowers. Summer visitors may get to see a Wanvisa water lily, a two-colored flower, yellow on one side and red on the other.





Teaching Garden

The Teaching Garden features lotus plants arranged in two artificial raised ponds about 20 meters long and 2 meters wide. The lotuses are planted in March and bloom in July. Among them is the Oga Lotus, a crimson flower that paleobotanist Dr. Ichiro Oga (1883–1965) created by germinating a 2,000-year-old seed he found in 1951 in Chiba, near Tokyo. With the lotuses growing to a convenient head height, this garden is particularly popular with photographers, who arrive early since the flowers start to close in the afternoon.

Hanakage Pond

This water lily pond is the showpiece exhibit at Mizunomori. Taking inspiration from the Giverny garden of French Impressionist painter Claude Monet (1840–1926), Hanakage Pond combines water lilies and other aquatic plants with picturesque bridges of stone and





wood as a backdrop. The pond has 50 varieties of both temperate and tropical water lilies, blooming at any given time between June and September. Most striking of these is the giant South American water lily (*Victoria cruziana*). Its lily pads, with their distinctive upturned rims and thorny undersides, grow up to 1.5 meters wide (in August, young children are invited to try sitting or standing on the pads). Other plants in the pond include papyrus, which was used by the ancient Egyptians to make paper, and water canna.





mizunomori

草津市立水生植物公園みずの森

指定管理者／近江鉄道ゆうグループ

Address:

1091 Oroshimo, Kusatsu,
Shiga 525-0001, Japan.

Telephone: 077-568-2332

<https://www.seibu-la.co.jp/mizunomori>

© Kusatsu Aquatic Botanical Garden Mizunomori

この英語解説文は観光庁の地域観光資源の多言語解説整備支援事業で作成しました。
This English-language text was created by the Japan Tourism Agency.



観光庁
Japan Tourism Agency