

A Historical Walk Around Kyoto

Photo by Masayoshi Masuda



Hagi Festival in Nashinoki Shrine

Nashinoki Shrine is located just to the east of Kyoto Imperial Palace. This shrine is well-known for Japanese bush clovers or *Hagi* (萩).

During *Hagi Festival*, visitors enjoy not only viewing *Hagi* with poems on strips of paper, but also some events related to noble life. Although a Kyogen play, archery, dance and music were cancelled due to a main hall improvement in 2010, tea ceremonies and a poem composing event will be held. For the tea ceremonies, green tea will be made using great water from the Somenoi water well in Nashinoki shrine. This well is the last of the three best waters in central Kyoto to still exist.

* In 2010, this festival is held on September 18th–20th.

Ancient Japanese Poets Familiar with *Hagi*

In ancient times, cultural entertainment such as poem composing was very popular particularly among Imperial Family and nobles. Nobles had lived in this area for a long time before the establishment of this shrine in 1885. They composed poems about various flowers and plants depending on the seasons. *Hagi* is the most used botanical word in the oldest anthology called *Manyoshu* (万葉集) which was compiled in the 8th century. Ancient Japanese people seemed to be close to *Hagi* in their daily life. Different types of *Hagi* still bloom in September, while this area is a hidden scenic spot for ginkgo in autumn.

The Origin of Nashinoki Shrine

Sanetsumu Sanjo (1802–1859) and his son, Sanetomi (1837–1891) are enshrined in this shrine. They are revered as masters of learning and acting because they were talented and contributed to Japan's Meiji Restoration.

During the Meiji Restoration when the Emperor and the capital were being moved to Tokyo, Sanetomi helped preserve Kyoto's culture by negotiability to have important Imperial ceremonies to continue to be held in Kyoto.

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