



Chrysanthemum Exhibition

Sorakuen Gardens, Kobe City Japan



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zichi Lorentz
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Chrysanthemum Exhibition

Sorakuen is widely regarded as the city's premier Japanese garden. Taijiro Kodera, father of former Kobe City Mayor Kenichi Kodera, laid the foundations for the garden in 1885, but it was not completed until the Taisho Era (1912-1926).

At that time the garden was usually referred to as "The Kodera Residence" or "The Sotetu Garden". However, the city took over the garden in 1941, opening it to the public under the name "Sorakuen".

Sorakuen is a typical example of the Japanese "stroll-garden", consisting of several paths that circle a central pond.

However, the garden incorporates open areas which is indicative of Western influences during the Meiji Era (1868-1911).

THE SORAKUEN

As far as Kobe urban parks are concerned, this alone boasts of a typical Japanese-style garden. The garden is located on the premises of the old residence of the late Mr. Kenkichi Kodera, a former mayor of kobe. Its construction was started by his father. Mr. Taijiro Kodera in 1885 and completed toward the end of the Meiji Era (1868-1912).

The layout of the Sorakuen is in conformity with that of classical Japanese gardens which consist of a lake, wooded areas and promenade lanes. However it has some open space as well on account of the European influence which was prevalent in Japan during the Meiji Era.

In olden days people called this place "Mr. Kodera's Residence" or "Sago Palm Garden". It was formally named "Sorakuen" after Mr. Kodera donated it to the City of Kobe in March 1941. It has become a settled practices since November of the same year to open this garden to the public.

Before world War II it had a magnificent dwelling house and supplementary buildings in its precincts. However most of these buildings were destroyed during the war. What remain now are the encircling walls the two entrances and the European-style stable (which was designated as one of Japan's important cultural assets in 1970).

To replace the building destroyed the late Mr. Hassam's house (designated also as one of the nation's important cultural assets in June, 1963) was reconstructed on these premises the "Sorakuen Hall" and a tea ceremony house were completed in October, 1963 and "Funayakata" which Mr. Ushio donated to the city was moved here in March 1980. These additions give the garden a unique picturesqueness. The magnificent beauty of the old camphor trees, sago palm shrubberies and stone-lanterns has been retained. The area of the Sorakuen is 19,566 squaremeters.

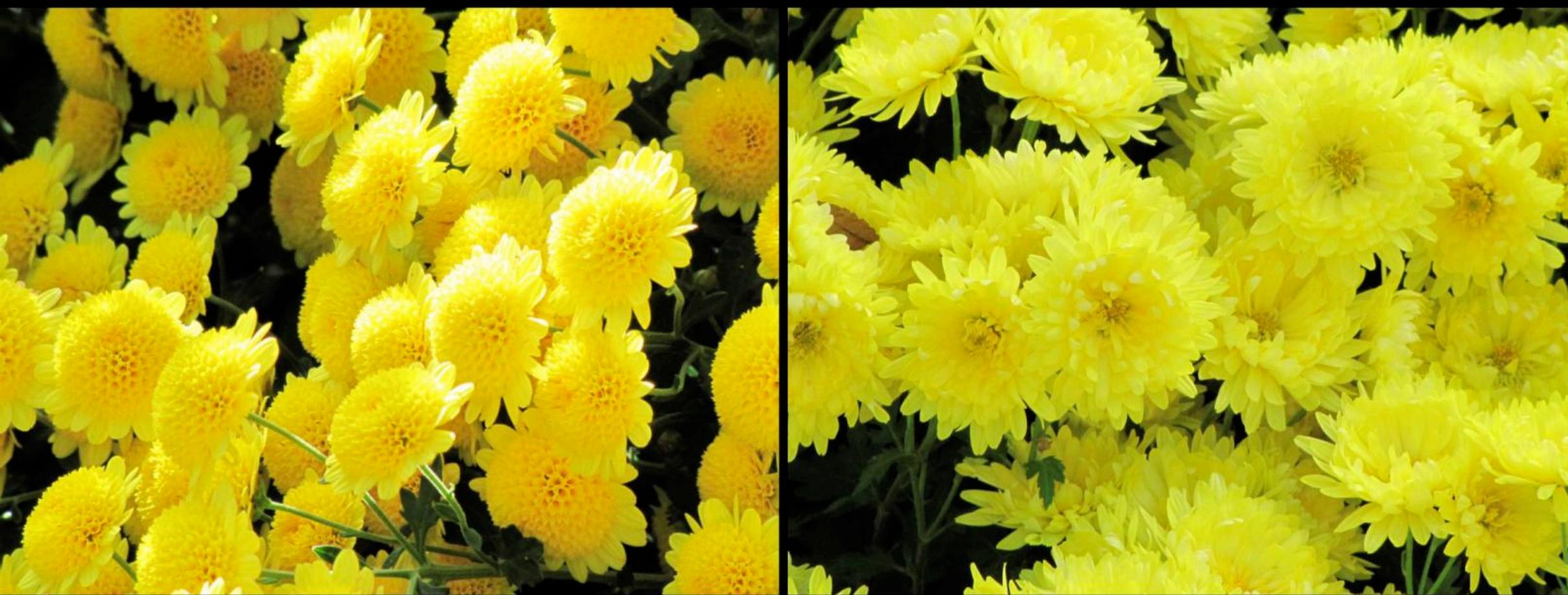


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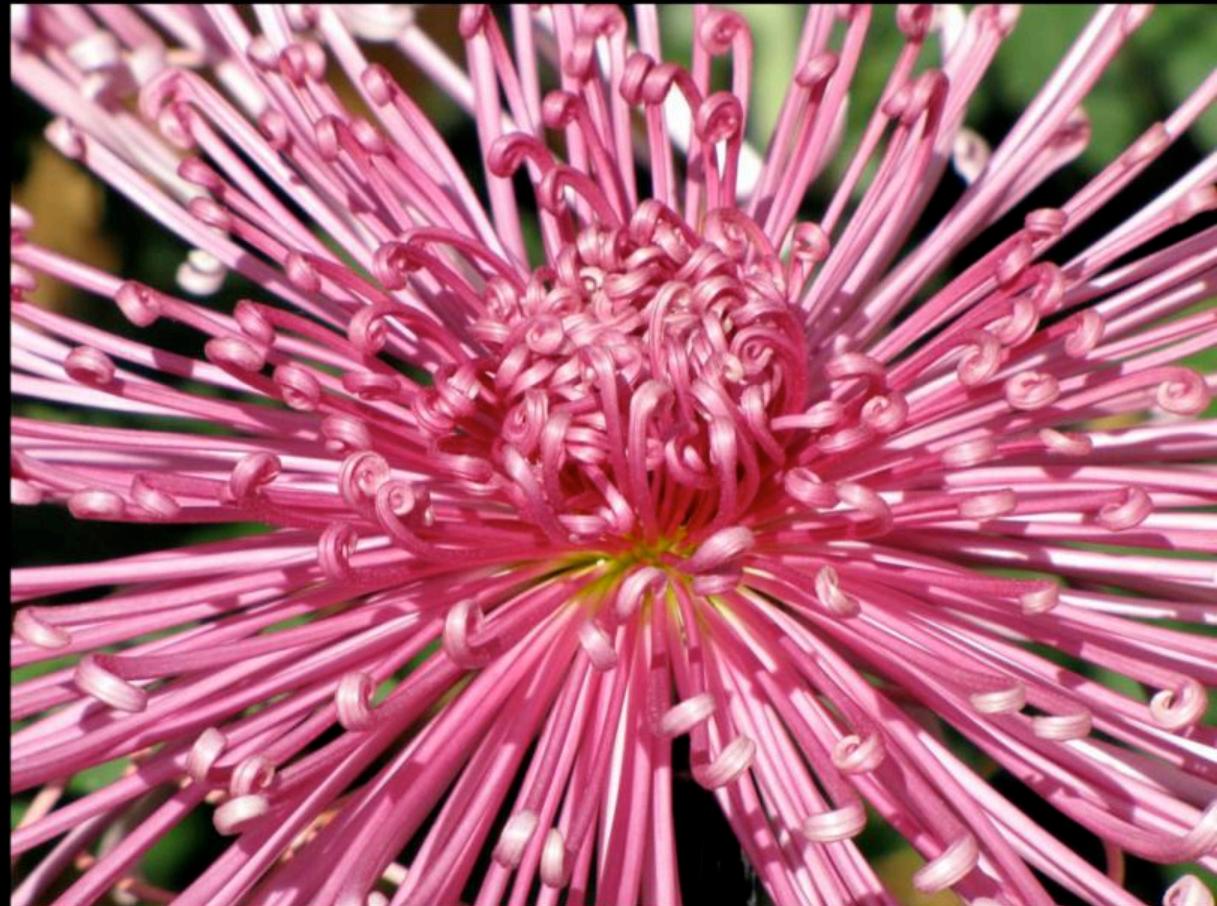














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National important cultural property

"Funa-Yakata"

Built Early Edo era (17th century)
Designation August 29th 1953

This barge is the part of the pleasure boat on rivers owned by the Lord of Himeji during the Edo era. This barge was used on the river until final Edo era. Then it was moved to Takasago from near Shikama port in the beginning of the Meiji era and at this time the cabins were detached from the boat so that it could be used as a tea house. Later in 1941 this was removed to the former owner, USHIO Yoshiro's house in Maiko Tarumi-ku, Kobe. In 1978 it was donated to the City of Kobe from Mr. USHIO and set up to the present position.

The wooden parts of the barge, both within and without are painted with either Shunkei lacquer or thick black lacquer and the ends of lintels and rafters are fitted with metal decorations covered with gold leaf. These fittings give us gorgeous and sensitive impressions.

It is thought that the barge was built from 1682 to 1704 by reason of the vestiges of metal family crests, while Lord Honda was assigned to Himeji area.

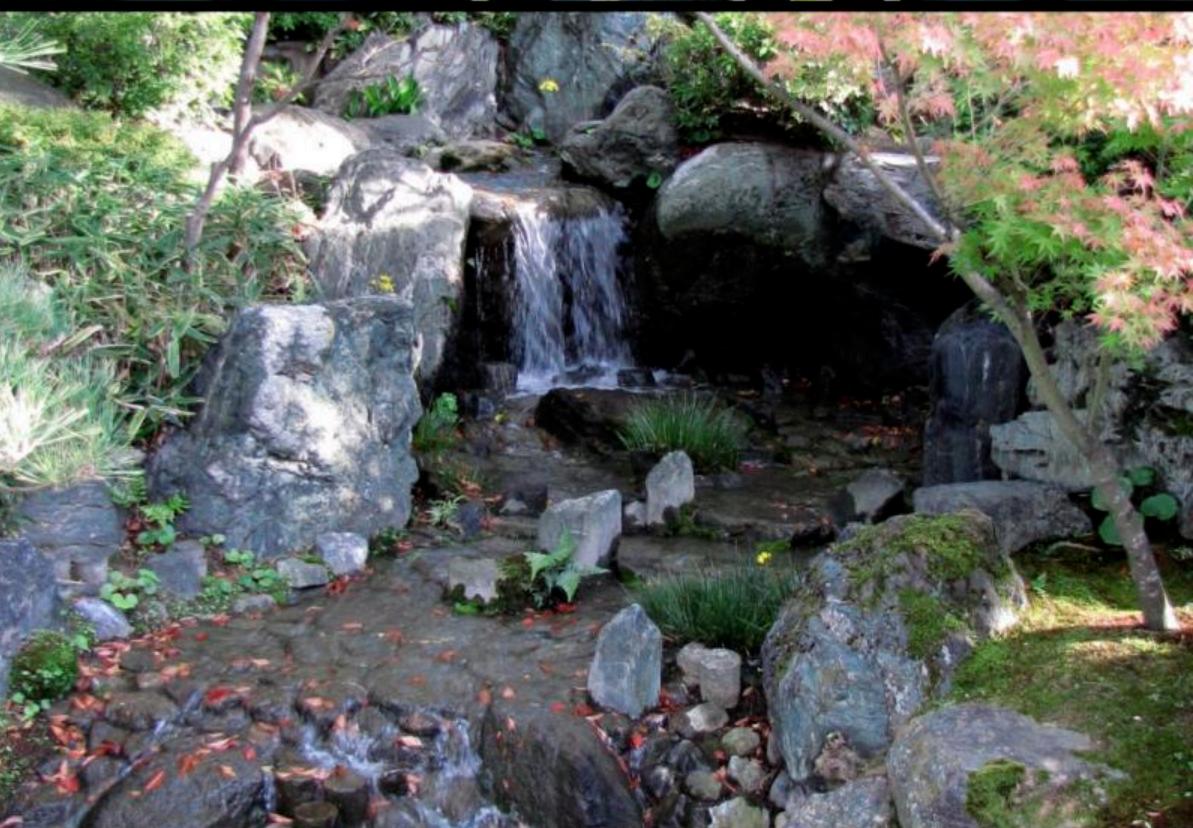
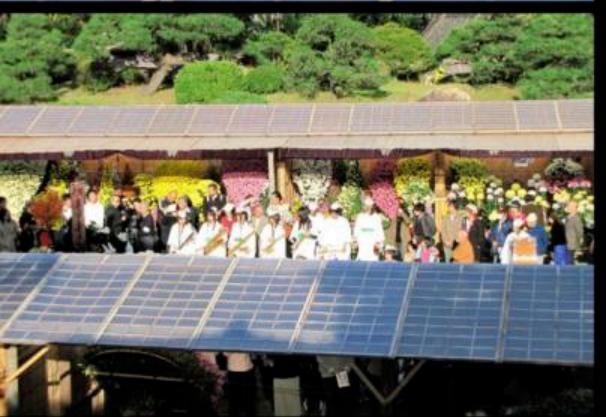
In the Edo era the feudal lords of west Japan vied with one another in building the barge for travelling to their compulsory residences in the capital. Very few of them exists but this is the only one for the river use that now remains.

December 1999

Kobe City Board of Education







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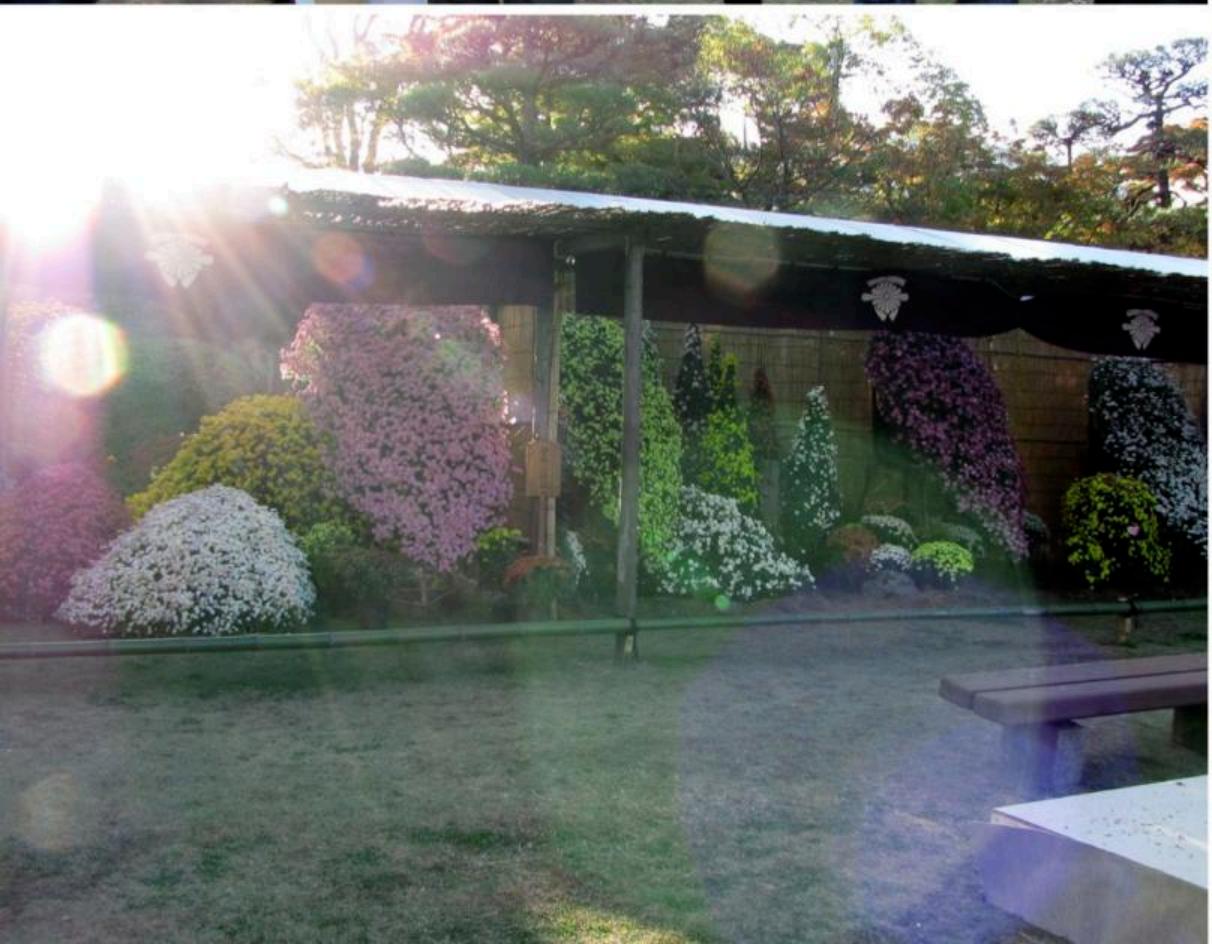
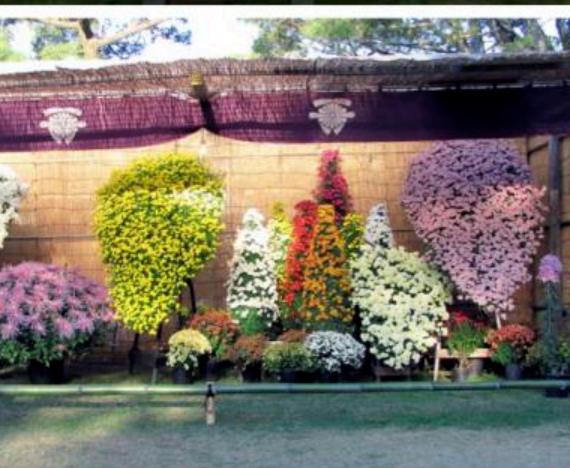










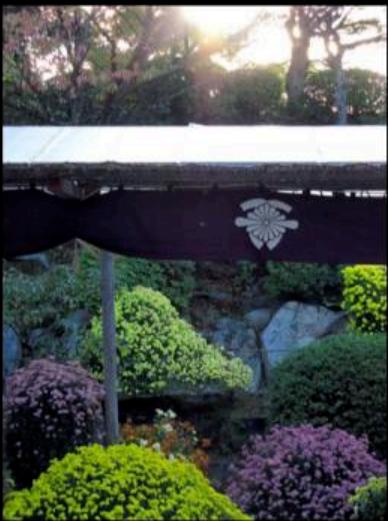


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