

Excellent Natural Cures

Traditions of growing natural cures

In ancient times, **Yamato**—current **Nara prefecture**—housed the earliest Imperial Court and was also an important place in terms of natural remedies and medicinal ingredients. In Yamato and the surrounding area called Kinki, medicinal plants were cultivated in order to protect the local people from epidemics. Natural ingredients from China and other countries were also brought to Yamato. Historically and geographically, Nara has had the right conditions to grow many kinds of medicinal plants. Surrounded by mountains, Nara has plenty of rainfall, hot summers, and cold winters with not too much snow. These factors make Nara a suitable place for growing medicinal plants.

Obuka Toki (*Yamato Toki*) (*Japanese Angelica*)(*Angelica acutiloba*)



Japanese angelica (Courtesy of Nara Prefecture Pharmaceutical Research Center)

”Toki”, or Japanese angelica, belongs to the umbelliferous family and its root is mainly used in natural medicines for women because it is effective in treating menstrual disorders and other diseases.

Toki-shakuyaku-san is a well-known Kampo medicine that contains this ingredient. In Japan, a variant called “Miyama Toki” grew naturally in Yamato. Cultivation of these plants began in the mid-17th century in Yamato and Yamashiro (southeastern Kyoto Prefecture), eventually becoming what is now known as “Obuka Toki”.



Yamato Shakuyaku (*Chinese Peony*)(*Paeonia lactiflora*)



Peony (Courtesy of Nara Prefecture Pharmaceutical Research Center)

It is said that the peony appeared in Japan during the Nara Period (8th century). Records tell us that it was being cultivated by 1445.

Due to the beauty of its flowers, there are many varieties of peonies which are used as garden plants. Those from Nara which have long been used as medicine reputedly have the best quality among the many peony varieties found in Japan.



Akaya Jio (*Glutinous Rehmannia*)(*Rehmannia glutinosa*)



Akaya Jio (Courtesy of Nara Pref. Pharmaceutical Research Center)

The plant is deeply connected to Nara, and was cultivated there in the Edo Period. A town called “Jio-cho” in Kashihara City reminds us of the close relationship between this plant and Nara.



Botanpi (*Moutan Peony*) (*Paeonia Suffruticosa*)



Moutan peony (Courtesy of Nara Pref. Pharmaceutical Research Center)

Hasedera Temple in Hase, Nara Prefecture is known for its peonies. An old temple record says that the peonies were planted on both sides of the temple’s ascending corridor in 1700.



Medicinal Plant Gardens in Nara

- **Morino Medicinal Plant Garden**

1880 Kamishin, Ouda, Uda City, Nara (Admission fee required)
<http://www.morino-kuzu.com/kyuyaku/>

Under the rule of Shogun Yoshimune, Uemura Saheiji Masakatsu was sent from the central government on journeys across the country in search of medicinal plants. In 1729, he visited Yamato. Morino Tosuke joined him on his expedition around Yamato. He was later granted six kinds of medicinal plants from the government. Together with the plants he himself had collected, he planted and cultivated them in the field behind his house in present-day Uda City.



Morino Medicinal Plant Garden
(Courtesy of Museum of Osaka University)

- **Kasuga Taisha Shin-en Man'yo Botanical Garden**

160 Kasugano-cho, Nara City, Nara Prefecture (Admission fee required)
http://narashikanko.jp/kan_spot/kan_spot_data/w_si154.html

Kasuga Taisha Shin-en opened in 1932 as the first botanical garden focusing on the plants mentioned in the *Man'yo-shu*, Japan's oldest poem anthology. It is situated in Kasugano, a place deeply related to the book, and has about 300 kinds of plants from its poems. The garden received a grant from the Emperor when it was first opened. It is also kept from receiving too much human care, which makes it more attractive to visitors.



Kasuga Taisha Shin-en Man'yo Botanical Garden
(Courtesy of the same garden)

- **Tamura Medicinal Plant Garden (Tamura Pharmaceutical Co. Ltd.)**

50 Nishiterada, Gose City, Nara (Reservation required)
<http://www.tamura-p.co.jp/yakuso/guide.html>

Since days of old, medicinal plants have been produced in Gose, which is where Tamura Pharmaceutical Company is located. It is also said that En-no-Gyoja invented the famous medicine "Daranisuke" while he was conducting ascetic training in the nearby mountains of Katsuragi.

Medicinal plants embody wisdom accumulated through ages by people wishing for good health. Such knowledge has been inherited by this medicinal plant

garden. Even ordinary-looking flowers here are being grown to improve people's health.



Medicinal Plant Garden of Tamura Pharmaceutical Co. Ltd.
(Courtesy of the same company)