# *KIRI • PAULOWNIA TOMENTOSA*

The majestic Paulownia tomentosa tree welcoming visitors to the Japanese Garden is rich with history and stories which makes it a wonderful place to begin a tour.

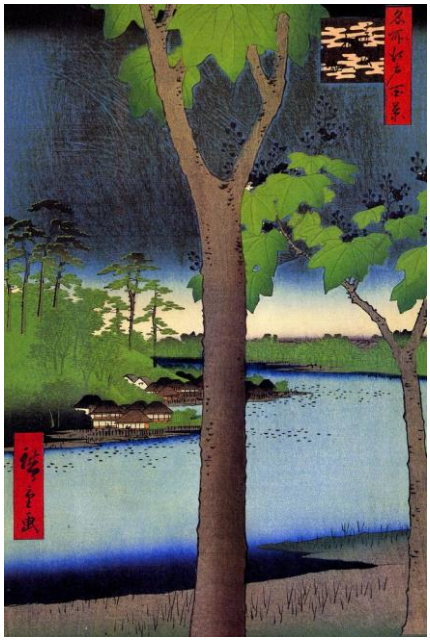
The use of Paulownia in Japan dates back to 200 AD. It is native to China where the custom of planting the tree at the birth of a girl was initially reserved for the aristocracy and later for the wealthy. From there it spread to Japan. The tree is a rapid grower, and the wood is harvested to make a dowry box and other gifts when the daughter is to be married. Even today (especially in Kyoto, Nara and Osaka), there remains a custom of sending over a kimono dresser made of Paulownia wood with the bride as she settles into her new home.

Carving the wood of *Paulownia* is an art form in Japan. It is the lightest wood in Japan, soft and warp-resistant. The wood is used to make musical instruments like the Japanese *koto* and Korean *gayageum* zithers, and to make *geta* (clogs). The wood is burned to make charcoal for sketching and powder for fireworks, the bark is made into a dye, and the leaves are used in vermicide preparations. Its wood cells are very porous which makes it heat and fire resistant so is used to line safes. Geisha used a treated, dried Paulownia branch to make up their eyebrows.

A single tree produces 20,000 seeds. The soft, lightweight seeds were commonly used as a packing material by Chinese porcelain exporters in the 19th century. Packing cases would often leak or burst open in transit causing seeds to scatter along rail tracks, creating many groves of Paulownia.

THE TALE OF GENJI

During the Heian period (794-1192) in Japan, the color purple was considered a royal color. Paulownia trees were planted at the Imperial palace. *The Tale of Genji* is the centerpiece of Heian literature and Paulownia is an abiding presence in the novel. Prince Genji's father was called Emperor Paulownia (Kiritsubo-no-Mikado) and Genji's mother, who dies shortly after Genji's birth, is the Lady of the Paulownia Court. The lavender hue of the flower is the color of romantic attachment throughout the tale. That color is *murasaki*, the first name of Genji's author, Murasaki Shikibu. Genji's adoptive daughter (and concubine!) is also called Murasaki.



*Akasaka Kiribatake, Hiroshige*

Paulownia were planted around Tameike Pond, an artificial lake in the capital fed by an underground spring, early in the Edo period. Hiroshige's print, Akasaka Kiribatake, from 100 Views of Edo, dominated by the tree in the foreground, shows the lake at dawn during the rainy season when the Paulownia flowers come into bloom. In the background is the hill where Hie Shrine, the traditional spiritual protector of Edo Castle affectionately known as *Sannō-san*, stands.

PAULOWNIA CREST

The Paulownia Seal originally was the private symbol of the Japanese Imperial Family, from as early as the twelfth century. The Toyotomi clan, who ruled Japan before the Edo period, adopted the Paulownia Seal for use as the crest of its clan. Now it is the seal for the government of Japan and used in official documents.


鳴蝉も連てふはりと一葉哉

naku semi mo tsurete fuwari to hito ha kana

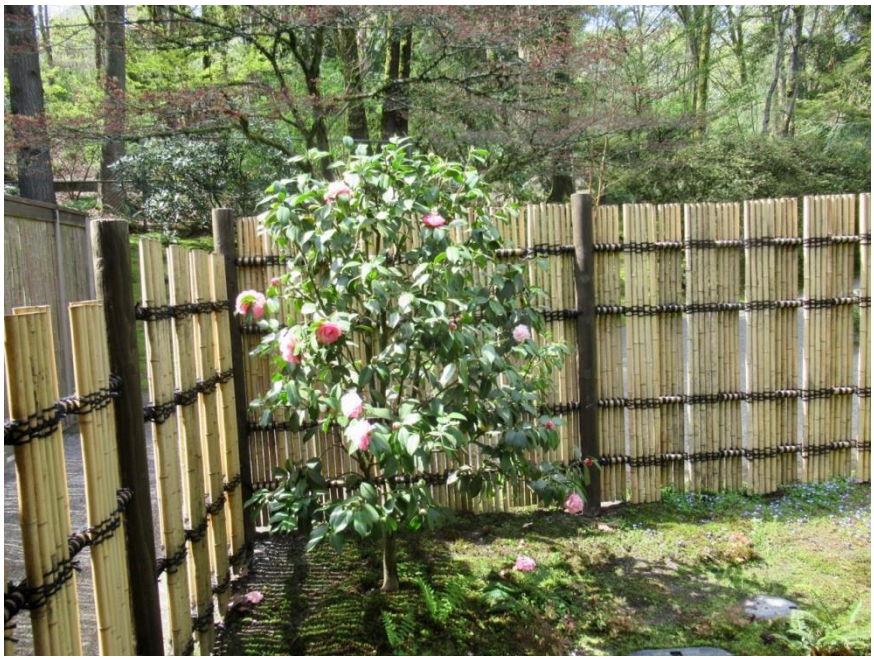
with a singing cicada
softly...
one leaf falls

Kobayashi Issa

The phrase, "one leaf" (*hito ha*), specifically denotes a paulownia leaf in the shorthand of haiku.

## *Mōsō-chiku & Sasa ● Phyllostachys and Pleioblastus*

In our garden we have two plant species, Phyllostachys and Pleioblastus. The first is a large plant by the ticket booth and the other one is dwarf bamboo located in several places along the fence.



Bamboo can also be seen in its supporting role in the garden. Notice the water feature in the tea garden, curved hoops along the path, and its use in the construction of a gate and fencing.

Bamboo adds a gentle rustling sound and moving shadows to a garden. The 17th century writer Ji-Chen's in the "Craft of Gardens" said bamboos should be planted "where the moonlight is dim and faint, because in this way you can increase the mystery of the place and engulf yourself in even deeper emotions." He recommended that 4/5ths of every garden be planted with bamboo.

Bamboo represents resilience and flexibility. "Bamboo mentality" means making compromises and eventually to go forward unbroken from all contests. The hollow stalk symbolizes tolerance and open mindedness.

Bamboo is a subject for poetry, storytelling and an object for ink painting. In the Heian poetry lexicon, bamboo segments evoke the image of generations. There was even a school of bamboo artists. An 11c bamboo artist instructed his pupils to "realize" the whole plant, rather than with details and to "move the brush....as the buzzard swoops when the hare jumps out."

"The Tale of Bamboo Cutter" by Taketori Monogatari is a beloved children's story written in the 10c. It details the life of a mysterious girl called Kaguya, who was discovered as a baby inside the stalk of a glowing bamboo plant.

Bamboo is the most versatile of Asian plants. It grows at a fast pace, often as much as a meter a day, and stops growing in a month. Over 1400 uses have been listed for bamboo. Bamboo is used in all sorts of construction projects such as, flooring, water pipes, furniture, thatch, kitchen utensils, musical instruments, fishing rods, rope, baskets, sleeping mats, and chopsticks. It is a source of pulp for paper and textiles. The city of Osaka is traditionally known for the manufacture of many kinds of excellent bamboo products, especially baskets. At the time of a severe earth quake, bamboo forests are considered safe ground because of the matted root structure.

The bamboo shoots are edible just as it peeks out of the ground. Bamboo can also be fermented or pickled. Sweet rice dumplings *chimaki* are wrapped in bamboo sheaths and served on Children's day. The sheaths are also used to make footwear and hats. The sheath has moisture retaining structure and sterilizing power.

There are many Japanese sayings and proverbs about bamboo:

- Dream of bamboo and a friend dies
- It is a bad year when a bamboo dies, i.e. - Bamboo dies after it flowers
- Like splitting a bamboo, i.e. - meaning frankness
- An old man is someone who has seen the bamboo flower twice

# *Tsubaki ● Camellia*

Camellia is a Genus of over 250 species of long-lived evergreen shrubs and small trees. More than 10,000 cultivars are known. They are found in acidic soil in woodland areas from N. India and the Himalayas to China and Japan, Taiwan, Southern Korea and South to North Indonesia, Java and Sumatra.

**Camellia japonica**/*tsubaki 椿、藪椿* -The oldest record of camellia is about 1900 years old. The book on camellias was published during Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) in China. In Japan, Camellia japonica was taken up by the samurai in the 12th century and was much further developed in the Edo period. The *Higo* clan in *Kyushu* was very interested in them and it was they who introduced Camellia sasanqua in to cultivation in the 17th century.

Camellia japonica blooms from the end of winter to spring. It is used as a shade tree, in hedges and parks and in flower arrangement. *Ohshima* Island, off the coast of *Izu* Peninsula is famous for camellia. Some camellia trees on the island are more than 400 years old. There is also an excellent camellia garden there. The seeds of Camellia japonica are crashed to make camellia oil. In *Amakusa*, *Kyushu* camellia oil is produced on a large scale and is best suited for the hair of both men and women, except that it contains a weak acid and perfume cannot be mixed with it. But the quality is better than that of sesame oil and olive oil, so if the acid is removed from it, it will have a bright future as a base for modern cosmetics.

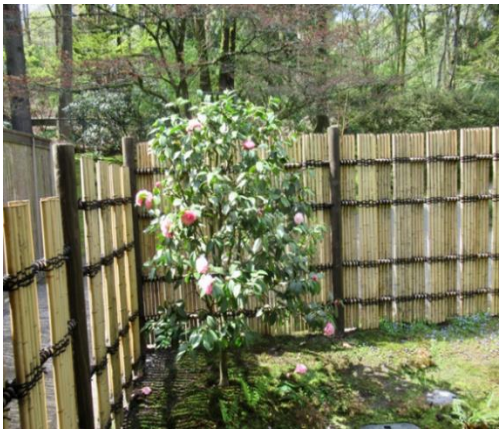
一つ落ちて　二つ落ちたる　椿かな　　*子規　shiki*
One fell,-- Two fell,-- Camellias

椿花落了　　春日為之動遙
Camellia flower fell,　Spring day became unstable

The best haiku and Chinese poems on the camellia are concerned with the falling flowers. In Japan the fact that the flowers are prone to fall from the tree in one piece, evoked comparison with the sudden decapitation which was the fate of many warriors and when leaving for war, they were advised to avoid the contact with the camellias. Even now to bring camellia flower to the hospital is also avoided.

白椿落つる音のみ月夜かな　　蘭更　rankou
All the evening the only sound,
The falling, Of the white camellia flowers

The specimen in the new display garden built in 2009 as part of the new gate house village, is a western introduction, Camellia japonica 'Nuccio's jewel'; a medium sized and slow growing shrub with soft washed, pink flowers that bloom in mid to late season.



Pictures by Aleksandra Monk

**Camellia sasanqua** *ｻｻﾞﾝｶ* is planted for its attractive late autumn to early winter flowers. The seeds yield tea-seed oil (*katashi abura)* which, like oil from Camellia japonica is used as a hair setting oil and occasionally for cooking . There are seven Camellia sasanqua bushes in the Seattle Japanese Garden.

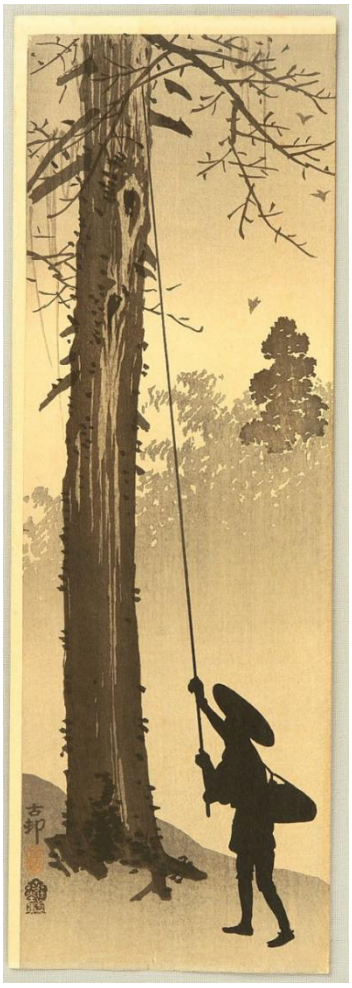
**Camellia sinensis** *cha*（茶）、*cha-no-ki* (茶の木) is an evergreen plant of the Camellia genus. That is sub-divided into two main subspecies known as Camellia sinensis var. sinensis, the variety that originally found growing in China and Camellia sinensis var. Assamica, the plant that grows as a native of India's south-eastern province of Assam. Our plant was dedicated to Ms. Kathleen Smith in 2006. She was a volunteer gardener and guide from 1989 to 2006.

The leaves are used for tea. In 805, Buddhist monk *Saicho* (最澄) brought back tea seeds from China and planted them at a place called *Sakamoto* (坂元) at the foot of Mt. *Hiei (*比叡). But it was not until 1191 when tea cultivation in Japan took hold. Zen Buddhist monk *Eisai* (栄西) brought back not only the Zen Buddhism but also tea culture from China. He brought back tea seeds and he gave them to *Myoue* Shonin(明恵上人)a monk from *kousanji* temple (高山寺) in *togano'o, (梅尾*) *Kyoto(京都)*.. The tea seeds were planted near the temple, and this was the beginning of famous tea of *Uji* (宇治). Tea was used as medicine then, also to keep the Buddhist monks awake during meditation.

# *Ichō • Ginkgo biloba*

Our 3 ginkgo trees displaying their butter-yellow fall color

The genus *Ginkgo* is a living link between the lower and higher plants. *Ginkgo biloba*, the only remaining species, is known in English as ginkgo – and as *ichō* in Japanese. It's a deciduous tree characterized by large seeds, long life, and endurance over millions of years. We're fortunate to have three tall, elegant specimens in the Seattle Japanese Garden. They bring to the garden ancient history, uniquely beautiful leaves & glowing fall color – thus subtly evoking Tokyo's renowned Jingu Gaien Ginkgo Avenue.



In China – and later, Korea and Japan – ginkgo was originally valued for the edibility of its seeds, known in Japan as *ginnan*. Their foul-smelling coating was removed, and the nutlike kernel that remained was soaked and/or roasted. This process reduced the concentration of a toxin present in the raw seeds. They were eaten plain – or used in sweet as well as savory dishes – and remain a popular food in eastern Asia. Ginkgo seeds, and products derived from them, were also used as oils for lighting & heating, in rituals, and in traditional medicine. Compounds from the seeds were used to treat cavities, skin conditions and respiratory illnesses. Even in the present day, ginkgo compounds are used to treat coughs, asthma and bladder infections.

Left, a man harvesting ginkgo nuts; woodblock print by Ohara Koson, 1910. Above, ginkgo leaves & fruit.

The "T" that symbolizes the prefecture of Tokyo looks like a ginkgo leaf

In addition to the importance of its seeds, ginkgo's fan-shaped leaf is beautiful and unique, and lends itself to stylization. In eastern Asia, it became a recognizable motif. This motif was especially important in Japan, where it emerged in paintings and poetry, and in the designs of family crests (*kamon*). By the 17th century, it appeared on swords and ceramics – and later, on buckles, jewelry, kimono and other textiles. More subtle examples abound. The tool used to pluck the strings of the *shamisen* (a traditional musical instrument) is shaped like a ginkgo leaf, as are the topknots (*oichomage*) of sumo wrestlers.

Giant ginko tree, Zenpuku-ji Temple, Minato, Tokyo

Ginkgos have long been valued as survivors. They are deep-rooted and tolerant of adverse conditions – including wind, pollution and fire. They produce chemicals that deter insects, and are also resistant to damage by bacteria, viruses and fungi. Individual trees are long-lived, and old specimens are very large. With time, trees reach 50 to 100 feet in height, and may spread wider, becoming massive in their girth. There is strong evidence that some ginkgos in Asia have attained an age of 1,000 years or more.

Ginkgo trees survived the 1923 Kanto earthquake and the 1945 atomic attack on Hiroshima. Several trees were less than 1½ miles from the epicenter. Their bark was scorched and their branches stripped away. A nearby temple was destroyed. Incredibly, the ginkgo trees survived and leafed out the following spring. Because of this toughness and adaptability, ginkgos succeed under difficult urban conditions and are commonly planted as street trees – including here in Seattle. They make up about 11% of Japanese street trees, reflecting their importance in Japan as ornamental plants – in addition to the practical and cultural utility of their products and images.

Within the last 200 years, ginkgo trees have been grown successfully under a wide range of climatic & soil conditions. Outside of Asia, they are grown primarily as ornamentals. Males are preferred, because they rarely (and then only in very small numbers) produce the malodorous seeds characteristic of female trees. Propagated from cuttings to ensure maleness, they are planted in gardens throughout the temperate world – and are still the subject of autumn *haiku*.

*stealing color*
*from the sun*
*autumn ginkgo* [*haiku* by Cara Homan, 2012]

# *Hinoki • Chamaecyparis obtusa*

Hinoki false cypress in the Seattle Japanese Garden.

Among the many conifers in the Seattle Japanese Garden is *Chamaecyparis obtusa*, formerly classified as *Retinospora obtusa*. It grows in various areas of our garden, notably in Area G, where this photo was taken. Native to central and southern Japan, it is known there as *hinoki* (i.e., "cypress") – hence its English common name, hinoki false cypress. One of Japan's most significant trees, it has been revered there for centuries for its beautiful, durable wood and the fragrant essential oils of its bark, wood and foliage.

With a rich, straight grain – and resistance to splitting, warping and rot – *Chamaecyparis obtusa* has been an indispensable building material in Japan for many centuries. Important in civil engineering and the construction of shrines and temples, it was also used to make many other products of daily life. These include sculptures, fragrant tubs for bathing, and implements such as tools, combs, fans and sake cups. Even after being cut, its durability continues to increase for about 200 years.

*Chamaecyparis obtus*a wood is still used in construction today, but primarily in high end items because of its expense. Products include sculpture, bathtubs, furniture and flooring. The luster, high durability and distinctive fragrance of the wood enhances people's enjoyment of products made from it.

Woodblock print of a woman climbing into a bathtub, probably made of fragrant hinoki wood. A statue of Zen Buddhist monk Shinchi Kakushin, made of hinoki wood and lacquer.

Hinoki's long usefulness has led to its loss in the wild, where it is considered an endangered species. Rare throughout its traditional range, it exists only in remnant stands. Nevertheless, planted trees are very common today in Japan – in plantations for harvesting, and as an ornamental plant in parks and gardens. Very large specimens are planted at temples, shrines and shrine plantations, but are otherwise uncommon. Such centuries-old trees may exceed 150 feet.

Hinoki false cypress has been important in Japanese history, life and culture not simply for its usefulness – and has long been valued for its warm, woody fragrance and for its spiritual and healing properties. It was one of three trees the Shinto religion viewed as sacred – the flowering evergreen *Cleyera japonica* (*sakaki*), *Chamaecyparis obtusa* and another conifer, *Cryptomeria japonica* (*sugi). Sakaki* was clearly the most important of the three, but hinoki was also used in Shinto ceremonies and purification rituals.

In a tradition that began over 1300 years ago, Ise Grand Shrine is completely replaced every 20 years. This Shinto shrine and pilgrimage site is rebuilt in an eight-year process without the use of any nails and entirely from hinoki wood. The largest pieces of wood, from trees more than 400 years old, come from an area in central Japan reserved for this purpose and renowned for producing superior timber. According to a traditional saying, raising trees takes as much care as raising children. It is believed that rebuilding the shrine gives it new energy – and that its old materials, used to repair or rebuild other shrines, impart new energy to them.

"Standing on the cypress stage" is another traditional saying. During the Tokugawa shogunate, only designated theatres were permitted to have stages constructed of *Chamaecyparis obtusa*, conferring superior status on the actors who performed there.

The fragrance of its wood and foliage derives from essential oils that consist of many aromatic chemicals, including "hinokitol." A compound low in toxicity and one that inhibits bacterial growth, it is also found in other members of the cypress family, the *Cupressaceae.* This essential oil is used as a natural remedy in personal goods such as toothpaste, hair products and perfumes.

Less desirable is the effect of pollen produced by the tree's small, conical, red-brown pollen cones – a major cause of spring "hay fever" allergies.

Hōryū Temple, main hall & 5-story pagoda. (photo: 2019)

Well-built hinoki structures can last 1000 years – and some buildings/artifacts are even older. Hōryū Temple (*Hōryū-ji*) in Nara, Japan, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and home to some of the oldest surviving wooden structures in the world – including its pagoda and main hall, built about 600 CE. They were rebuilt after a fire in about 700 CE. Twenty-six other buildings in the complex were built before 800 CE. All of them together are considered the oldest wooden buildings in the world.

# *Fuji ● Wisteria*

Wisteria was considered very elegant and refined in the 11th century Heian court. Governing aristocrats, the Fujiwara clan, held flower viewing parties under the wisteria trellis. The soft inside skin of the vine was used to weave clothing and tatami borders. The vine in its entirety is very strong. Old historical sources indicate that a wisteria vine was used to pull a wooden sleigh to carry a huge stone coffin during the 3-4th century when a burial mound was built at the emperor's death.

Wisteria trees can grow in very poor soil and old documents state that wisteria roots were eaten at the time of famine. New shoots can be eaten parboiled. Flowers can be eaten as salad or as tempura. Salt-pickled flowers are used as tea. Knots on the tree are used to treat stomach cancer.

When pruned after flowering, there are no seeds. Therefore, seeds are rare and considered a delicacy. When seeds are pounded they have a texture of mochi and they were treasured as source of sugar during the Edo period.

The Ashikaga Flower Park in Tochigi, Japan, is home to more than 350 wisteria trees. At the center of the park is its main attraction: a 140-year-old tree believed to be the oldest living wisteria in Japan. The plant is named the "Great Miracle Wisteria." The largest wisteria plant in North America, planted in 1894 is at Sierra Madre in California, and has been the center of an annual festival since 1918.

There is a traditional Japanese dance titled “Fuji Musume,” the “Wisteria Maiden,” which features the spirit of the wisteria plant, transformed into a bashful and romantic young woman.

The dance comes from the story about a painting of the Wisteria Maiden in the town of Otsu. The painting catches the eye of a male passerby. As he gazes into the painting, the wisteria maiden becomes so infatuated with the man that she comes to life, stepping out of the painting to dance. She writes heartfelt letters, but the letters go unanswered. The dance expresses the depth of emotion of her unrequited love, eventually leading her to sadness and despair. Heartbroken, she re-enters the painting, where she remains in the last pose of the dance.

The wisteria is a popular motif found in many art forms including painting, printing, textile design, pottery, stone and wood carvings.

## *Matsu ● Pinus species*

In the Seattle Japanese garden there are 12 species of pine (*matsu*) and 64 individual pine trees. In Japan pines refer to endurance and longevity and are widely planted throughout Japan and the world.

In the north end of the garden is a black pine, *Pinus thunbergii* which was a gift in 1993 from Dick Yamasaki. Dick was a member of the team that created the garden in 1959-60. It was already 80 years old when it was moved to the garden.
A quote from the Sakuteiki, Japan's Gardening Classic book written in the 11th century beautifully describes our tree. "The pine trees used in Japanese gardens need not be too tall but they should be old, splendid in form and laden with deep green needles."

Famous pine trees are shaped from early years and can take 100 plus years to grow into the basic shape. The Rikusho-no-Matsu or "sailboat" tree at the Kinkakuji temple in Kyoto is made of one pine tree and was 100 years in the making. When the tree was young, a branch was bent into shape by means of strings and wires and left for several years. The branch formed the hull of the ship. Then the central trunk was allowed to grow and was formed into the sail of the boat. Seventy or eighty years were needed for this operation. Currently it is presumed to be four to six hundred years old. "Hair dressing" or trimming has been practiced on the tree every year. Each spring a gardener climbs the pine tree to trim off the sprouts or candles to concentrate the growth on the shaping of the tree. It faces west, meaning people could 'ride' the boat to the western 'pure' land.

*Matsu* are strongly associated with Japan's original religion, Shintoism, which viewed pines as *yorishiro* — that is a place capable of attracting the gods (*kami*). In fact the word *matsu* means 'waiting for a god's soul to descend from heaven.' The *kami* are attracted to beautiful trees and the grain God was believed to dwell on pine branches.
*Matsu* is also the pronoun citation of the verb "to wait" and in Heian era poetry was strongly associated with waiting for a lover. More broadly, pine trees suggest the idea of waiting for a difficult situation to be resolved.

Red pine *Pinus densiflora* and Black pine, *Pinus thunbergii* are often paired in Japanese gardens. The red pine is considered more feminine, the needles are softer and the bark redder. The black pine has stiffer needles and is considered more masculine. These pines are also seen in paintings, wood block prints and decorating ceramics.

Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk; Suzuki Kiitsu, early 19th century

Pines are often referred to in legends. For example it is said that princess Konohana-no-Sakura-Hime once had her eye hurt on a pine needle. “No pines shall grow here” said the princess. Hence hardly any pine trees are now found at Hakone and its vicinity.

Pines and cranes are both associated with longevity. The pines on Turtle Island suggest the immortals flying on the backs of cranes.

The wood is used for many purposes in everyday life such as house construction, fuel, musical instruments, tools, turpentine, and varnish. The red pine has a high resin content which makes the wood strong and rot resistant and is a hot burning fuel for pottery kilns. The pine resin has also been used to provide a protective callus over wounds and protects them from infections. The black pine is also used as a garden tree, or for hedging or a street tree or a boundary marker for Shinto shrines.

In literature, one can find Haiku and folk stories that feature pine trees. For example:

New summer robes—
Listening to the pine breeze
They emerge

by Kobayashi Issa

A favorite children’s story is The Sticky, Sticky Pine. It can be found in the book Japanese Children’s stories by Florence Sakade. The story begins when a Woodcutter finds a tree in the forest which has a broken limb. "These, your tender twigs, I shall wrap," he whispered, "and in this way, I'll stop the sap." The woodcutter carefully mended the branches, wrapping them in bandages by pulling off his own jacket and tearing it in pieces to use as cloth. There is more to the story, but for that you must read it yourself.

## *Aki-no Nanakusa* ●
## *Seven Flowers of Autumn*

The Seven Flowers of Autumn (*Aki-no Nanakusa*) **秋の七草** is not a very well known concept to many people outside of Japan, but a very popular and beloved topic in Japanese literature and paintings at least since the Nara Period (710-794). The verses by Yamanoue-no-Okura (660-733) are believed to be the origin of the tradition of the 7 Flowers of Autumn. They are taken from The Man'yōshū (万葉集), which is the oldest existing anthology of Japanese poetry.

| | |
|---|---|
| aki no no ni | Flowers blossoming |
| sakitaru hana o | in autumn fields - |
| yubi orite kaki kazoureba | when I count them on my fingers |
| nana kusa no hana. | they then number seven. |

| | |
|---|---|
| hagi ga hana | The flowers of bush clover, |
| obana, kuzubana | zebra grass, kudzu, |
| nadeshiko no hana | fringed pink, |
| ominaeshi | yellow patrinia |
| mata fujibakama | thoroughwort, |
| asagao no hana. | and Japanese morning glory. |

**Hagi / bush clover**

**Obana or Susuki / porcupine or zebra grass**

**Nadeshiki /pink**

This poem and the flowers it mentions are still popular in Japan today, with one change to the original set of seven flowers; namely, *asagao* (Japanese morning glory) is often replaced by *kikyō* (balloon flower). Whenever Japanese artists have drawn an autumn scene they typically include a subset of these flowers to indicate to the viewer that the season depicted is autumn. Seven plants of autumn, along with rice dumplings, are common altar offerings during *Tsukimi* (moon viewing), which is celebrated mid-August of the lunar calendar (mid-September in the solar calendar).

Around 2012 our Plant Group noted that four of the seven were growing side-by-side in the south bed of Azumaya. We wondered if they had been placed together on purpose. The 2012 gardeners were not able to answer. After much sleuthing and inquiry the Plant Group discovered two facts:

1. One of the previous Senior Gardeners, Jim Thomas, planted them in the 1990s near the Azumaya and throughout the nearby orchard. He planted 6 of 7, excluding Japanese arrowroot *kuzu* plant (invasive in our climate), based on his research of instructions left in 1959 by the

Garden's original builder and designer, Juki Iida, who wanted the flowers to brighten the orchard's understory. The summer droughts of 2014-15 gradually destroyed most of them. In the fall of 2015 the current Senior Gardener, Peter Putnicki, replanted 6 of them in the same bed, where they are carefully nursed and still thrive for the visitors enjoyment every early fall.

**Ominaeshi / yellow patrinia**

2. Those seven Japanese indigenous perennials are appreciated mainly for their flowers. They have never been considered core plant material in Japanese gardens which traditionally consist of green plants, with a significant number of evergreens to suggest the idea of permanence. Master Iida, who built many gardens in post-WW2 bombed-out Japanese cities, wanted to bring a note of hope to the garden visitors. He planted flowers which grew naturally in the countryside or were enshrined in culture and art. Most of them are small and dainty, yet provide visual enjoyment. Those pastoral accents (signifying rural land and giving spiritual guidance) eventually became a personal signature of Juki Iida's gardens – fulfilling the design principle of *Shizen sa*, naturalness.

**Fujibakama / thoroughwort**

This is a sad place to note that out of the over 1000 gardens that master Iida built in his lifetime the Seattle Japanese Garden is the last one existing, as even his own garden in Tokyo fell to the needs of city developers a couple of years ago. It is with gratitude and a sense of wonder that in 2019 we are still able to enjoy Juki Iida's work and ideas, including Seven Flowers of Autumn. They are as follows, in order as they appear in the Okura's 8th century poem:

**Kikyo / ballon flower**

- HAGI / 萩 • bush clover / *Lespedeza thunbergii*
- OBANA / 尾花 or SUSUKI / ススキ • pampas, Eulalia, Susuki or silver grass / *Miscanthus sinensis*
- KUZU / 葛 • kudzu or arrowroot / *Pueraria lobata* {not in SJG)
- NADESHIKO / 撫子 • pinks / *Dianthus superbus* (SJG has *Dianthus 'kahori)*
- OMINAESHI / 女郎花 • damsel or maiden flower or yellow patrinia / *Patrinia scabiosifolia*
- FUJIBAKAMA / 藤袴 • thoroughwort / *Eupatorium fortunei* (SJG has *Eupatotorium purpureum* - Joe Pye weed*)*
- KIKYOU / 桔梗 • (previously Asagao) • bell- or balloon flower / *Platycodon grandiflorum*


**Kuzu / kudzu (NOT in SJG)**

# *Sugi ● Cryptomeria japonica*

Cryptomeria Age and Range – Cryptomeria or Japanese cedar is the oldest and largest living tree in Japan and is native to China and Japan. It grows throughout Japan and has different characteristics depending on where it grows. This Haiku gives one the feel of the sugi.

**ama-dare no ..... 雨だれの**
**ootsubu kotsubu ..... 大粒小粒**
**sugi no eda ..... 杉の枝**

**dripping rain**
**in big drops, small drops –**
**a cedar branch**

Jōmon Sugi is the most famous tree in Japan, This worn and withered giant was so gnarled that Edo-period loggers made no attempt to fell it. The 22km hike to get there and back puts it just within reach for fit, but non-athletic day hikers.

There was a legend about this tree - far bigger than any other on the island, so large that it takes 13 people with outstretched hands to encircle it, and no one alive knows exactly where it is, although it's somewhere in the mountains, above the logging operations. A man, named Teiji Iwakawa, was so determined to find this legendary tree that he spent seven years searching. And then, in 1966, he found it. Estimates about its age have varied radically, from 2,000 years to 7,200 years. Since the tree is hollow, carbon dating can verify only 2,170 years. The Jōmon sugi is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Architecture and construction –
Cryptomeria has been used for hundreds of years in the building of tea houses, shrines, and in buildings. Tea houses were made from Kitayama sugi beginning in the Oei period from 1394 – 1428. The trees are felled from late autumn to early winter. The bark is then carefully removed and the round logs left to season for 2 to 3 years. The seasoned wood is polished with white sands and a vertical saw cut is made to prevent cracking. *(Where do we see it in the garden today?)*

Sugi from Yakushima, called Yakusugi was used in shipbuilding and architecture. However, the bulk of the Yakusugi was used to make roof tiles called *hiragi* or flat wood. *Hiragi* was sent to the Satsuma Domain as annual tribute. Due to increased demand for Yakusugi, the Meiji.

government (1868-1921) prohibited residents from cutting trees. In 1921, the National Forestry Bureau announced a plan the forest management: The front of the mountain is for local profit only, local people may harvest trees for firewood and charcoal, local hiring for logging, forestation and gathering, government funded roads around Yakushima.
*(How does this compare with our logging policies?)*

Sake and Cryptomeria

The Yoshino Sugi was a key element in making fine sake barrels called taru for over 200 years.

Preparing barrels for shipping (1930s)

It was used until the early 1900s when glass bottles came into wide use. Yoshino Sugi, has a refreshing aroma and scent of Japanese Cedar which becomes part of the sake. Yoshino sugi also has rot-resistant qualities and has reddish brown wood in the center and middle section and has beautiful light, white-like color wood in the outer section. This combination of white exterior and red interior was especially prized in sake barrel making.

Demand for the Yoshino Sugi caused a shortage in supply and reforestation efforts were begun. A group was formed called the *yamamori* or protectors of the forest. The *yamamori* worked both as a type of forest ranger to protect the trees as well as a type of "farmer" to plant and cultivate these precious trees

There is a street in Japan called the Cedar Avenue of Nikkō which is lined with about 13,000 cryptomeria trees. They were planted by Matsudaira Masatsuna, a feudal lord serving Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616). Masatsuma was too poor to donate a stone lantern at the funeral of Ieyasu but requested instead to plant an avenue of sugi so that future visitors might be protected from the sun. The offer was accepted; the Cedar Avenue of Nikko, still exists today and is over 40 miles long.

This site is designated by the Japanese government as both a Special Historic Site and a Special National Monument.
*(Where are the oldest trees in Washington? How old are they? What kind of trees are they?)*

## *Sakura • Prunus serrulata*

Japan was an agricultural country with rice as the most important product. Japanese people considered the cherry tree to be the *yorishiro* (object to which a divine spirit is drawn) of the grain god. Cherry blossoms in the spring were thought to be the god's indication of an abundance of grains in the fall. People foretold a good or bad rice crop in the fall depending on the condition of the blossoms. In olden days when a calendar did not exist, the bloom of the cherry blossoms was an indication for people to start planting rice in the field. People found a close relationship between cherry blossom and the grain god. "*Sa*" in *sakura* means "the grain god" and "*kura*" means "seat" for the grain god. *Sakura* means the place where the grain god resides. People believed that the grain god lives in the mountains and at the time of rice planting he comes down to the village. Blooming cherry branches in the mountains were brought to the rice field and sake and food were offered to the god for a good crop in the fall. When the rice planting was done the grain god goes back to the mountains. This is the origin of *hanami* (flower viewing party) which is still held today where family and friends gather under the cherry blossoms with sake and food.

There is a saying in Japan: "Among flowers, cherry blossoms are the best. Among people, samurai are the best." Cherry blossoms are cheerful, pure and straightforward and they bloom all at once and petals fall in a flash. Similarly samurai, the best among people, are willing to die gallantly with no regrets just like cherry blossoms. This is a good reflection of the Japanese mentality. "mono no aware"(appreciation of fleeting nature of beauty) is a fundamental Japanese aesthetic sense.

In January, 1910, 2,000 Japanese cherry trees arrived in Washington, D.C. from Japan but had fallen prey to disease during the journey. In response, a private Japanese citizen donated funds to transport 3,020 new trees taken from the famous collection on the bank of the Arakawa River in Adachi Ward, a suburb of Tokyo. In March 1912, the trees arrived in Washington, D.C, and on March 27 the first two trees were planted along the Potomac River's Tidal Basin in a formal ceremony. The rest of the trees were planted along the basin and on the White House grounds. The blossoming trees proved immediately popular with visitors and in 1934 city commissioners sponsored a three-day celebration of the late March blossoming of the trees, which grew into the annual Cherry Blossom Festival. After World War II, cuttings from the cherry trees were sent to Japan to restore the Tokyo collection that was decimated by bombing attacks during the war.

Japan's national flowers are the chrysanthemum and the cherry blossom. The Emperor's crest is a 16-petaled chrysanthemum and the chrysanthemum is on the Japanese passport. Japanese policemen wear a cherry blossom badge. Japanese family crests often use stylized plant designs with the exception of cherry blossoms. The reason for this is that the family wants a symbol of longevity that lasts for generations and not a cherry blossom that is very transient.

The Sakura song is a beloved song in Japan and is like a second Japanese national anthem.

A Japanese poem written by Priest Saigyo (1118-1190) on his death bed is very well known in Japan. It translates to:

I wish to die
In spring, beneath the cherry blossoms
While the springtime moon is full.

## *HANASHŌBU • IRIS ENSATA*

Beautiful iris beds are iconic flora of Japanese Pond/Stroll Gardens of the Momoyama/Edo periods. They grow on our Seattle Japanese Garden lake and shoreline landscape. A beloved flower in Japan, they have been cultivated for over centuries for their agricultural purposes, symbolism, cultural uses, and probably, above all, their beauty.

The term "Japanese iris" encompasses three species of irises cultivated in gardens or growing wild in Japan: *hanashōbu* (Iris ensata), *kakitsubata* (Iris laevigata) and *ayame* (Iris sanguinea). Of these three species, I. ensata is the one most commonly referred to as "Japanese iris" outside Japan and it is an important, early-summer element of our Seattle Japanese Garden.

In Japan, iris culture is an art. Beginning at least 500 years ago, the Japanese have developed more than 2000 cultivars from the original wild plants. These cultivars are recognized by their large, beautifully colored and patterned flowers, notable for their wide falls (the flower parts that hang down) and graceful, horizontally spreading form. According to the place where it was cultivated, I. ensata is classified into three strains – the Edo (Tokyo) were raised in the fields, marshes, wet grassy places and can withstand outdoor conditions; the Higo (Kumamoto Prefecture) were bred in pots, often indoors to withstand heavy rain; and Ise (Mie Prefecture) Kyoto area, pot-grown indoors, associated with religious shrines.

Irises that had been developed to grow outdoors were planted in huge display gardens, and people came to the gardens in large numbers when the plants were in bloom, from May to July. This tradition, similar to that of visiting the cherry trees during their blooming season, continues in Japan today with numerous gardens to visit.. This early 19th century woodblock print by Hiroshige, the famous *ukiyo-e* artist, depicts the Kotaka-en *hanashobu* garden near Tokyo, with its three viewing pavilions, rows of irises and many visitors.

In ancient times, farmers planted wild irises in or near their rice fields -- because they needed to rely on seasonal changes to direct their labors. Iris were important signal plants because their blooming coincided with the start of the rainy season, the time for transplanting rice plants from seed beds to the fields. The Ota-jinja Shrine in Kyoto, known as the Purple Iris Shrine and notable for the bright flowers that cover the grounds in May and June, is devoted to the god of plentiful harvests and fittingly has been an important shrine for farmers since its beginning and has scenery loved since the Heian period.

The Edo period stroll garden includes famous landscape scenes. One of those scenes that was best known from a 10-centry anthology of poems, The Tales of Ise, is that of the Eight Bridges, the *Yatsuhashi.* Our garden's zig-zag bridge with iris beds on the pond's shore recreates the essence of the scene.
In the poem a traveling poet writes of coming upon a profusion of Japanese iris, *Kakitsubata,* blooming in shallow water beside an eight-planked bridge. The sight of irises prompts him to compose a nostalgic love poem. The first syllable of each line forms the Japanese word for those irises, *Kakitsubata* (ba = ha)….

| | |
|---|---|
| ***Ka**ragoromo* | *I have a beloved wife* |
| ***kit**sutsu narenishi* | *familiar as the skirt* |
| ***tsu**ma shi areba* | *of a well-worn robe* |
| ***ha**rubaru kinuru* | *and so this distant journeying* |
| ***ta**bi o shi zo omou* | *fills my heart with grief.* |


Irises at Yatsuhashi by Ogata Kōrin, from a pair of screens, ink and color on gold leaf on paper; date: after 1709.

Historically and in modern Japanese culture, the flowering iris can be found as a kimono pattern, as a symbol in paintings, and in Japanese haiku. It is a popular motif in textile art, and is frequently used in *ikebana*.

垣津旗よりあの虹は起りけん

*Kakitsubata yori ano niji wa okoriken*

Irises—

from which that rainbow
rises

Kobayashi Issa 1803


Torii Kotondo, Iris Kimono -1932

## *Sho-Chiku-Bai • Three Friends of Winter*

Plum, pine and bamboo are collectively known as the Three Friends of Winter. They remind us to persevere…the plum braves the cold of winter to blossom, the pine stays green throughout the cold season and the bamboo bends in storms, but does not break. The three "friends" are found on textiles used for kimonos, paintings, scrolls, ceramic decorations, and New Year's greetings.

The Three Friends first appeared together in a poem by the 9th century Tang Dynasty poet, Zhu Qingyu. The Song Dynasty artist, Zhao Menjian (c.1199-1264) among others of the time, made this grouping popular in painting. Another Song Dynasty writer "for his residence, earth was piled to form a hill planted with a hundred plum trees, which along with lofty pines and tall bamboo comprise the friends of winter. "

In Japan the three plants are known as "the three auspicious friends" and called *Sho-Chiku-Bai*. The pine represents longevity, bamboo represents perseverance, and plum represents courage. These qualities are also applied to people in art. Courageous literary characters are often presented in kimono with plum blossom, bamboo and pine patterns.

The friends are particularly associated with the start of the lunar New Year, appearing on greeting cards and as a design stamped into seasonal sweets. *Surimono* are greeting cards for holidays and almost always contain a poem and feature the auspicious three friends. The handmade cards were popular during the 18th century until the end of the 19th century when Japanese began mass producing greeting cards.

*Kadomatsu* or gate pines are given at New Years to place before the door. They are made with the three auspicious Friends of Winter. These are set up at New Year's and remain for 14 days, a period called *matsu no uchi* (within the pine). The grain God was believed to dwell on pine branches and people set *Kadomatsu* to welcome the God at the beginning of the year.

In spite of harsh winter weather, the plum produces fragrant flowers. *Ume* (plum) is a protective charm against evil. It should be planted in the NE corner of the garden as it is believed that evil comes from that direction. The fruit can be made into juice, wine or pickled and preserved.

There are very stylized patterns for The Three Friends. Once you recognize them you will find them in many Art works, textiles and ceramics. Can you find the three friends?

Winter plum, your limbs
are twisted and creak like mine
Ancient as I am Buson (1715-83)