Aso Grassland Conservation Center

Obon Flower-Picking Tradition

The grasslands of Aso are home to 600 different types of plants and flowers. Each year in August (around the 15th), local people celebrate the Obon Festival, a centuries-old tradition in which Japanese people welcome their ancestors’ spirits into their homes and provide them with offerings. Families pay tribute to their ancestors by presenting these offerings both at special altars that are prepared within the home and at the graves of deceased relatives.

In Aso, people gather wildflowers from the abundant grasslands to use in offerings for the Obon Festival. Over the years, as the grasslands have diminished in size, so too have the variety and number of wildflowers found in Aso. Many plants are now protected species and must not be collected by locals or visitors. The Obon flower-picking tradition stems from the harmonious relationship between people and nature. It continues thanks to the respect and understanding of the local people for this special habitat.