

Plants

Meakan-fusuma

Meakan-fusuma (*Arenaria merckiioides Maxim.*) is a plant named after Mt. Meakan, where it was first discovered. It is an alpine plant with a mass of tiny white flowers, resembling the stars in the night sky. Native to Hokkaido, it is found only on Mt. Meakan, along the Shiretoko Peninsula, and on the Kuril Islands, an island chain stretching approximately 1,300 km northeast of Hokkaido.

On Mt. Meakan, Meakan-fusuma inhabits the rocky slopes above the forest of creeping pines, starting at an altitude of 1,000m and continuing up to the 1,499 m summit. The plant grows to a height of between five and fifteen centimeters and begins to flower after the snow melts in June. It typically continues to bloom through August, attracting butterflies and other insects. Its five white pointed petals and green leaves stand out on the bleak volcanic slopes, and is visible along the Mt. Meakan Trail. Meakan-fusuma can also be seen between Mt. Meakan and Mt. Akanfuji, spreading in a meadow along the valley and swamp that link the two mountains.

Meakan-kinbai

Named after Mt. Meakan where it was first discovered, the Meakan-kinbai (*Potentilla miyabei Makino*) is a rare alpine plant. Kinbai means gold plum, because its yellow flowers resemble plum blossoms. Meakan-kinbai is a species of ground-covering plant that grows about three to ten centimeters in height. It blooms from June to July and can be seen in the alpine regions of Hokkaido such as the Akan area, Shiretoko, the Daisetsuzan Volcanic Group, and Mt. Yotei, as well as on the Kuril island chain that reaches 1,300 km northeast of Hokkaido.

The heads of the flowers extend well above the grayish-green leaves on long stems. Looking closely at the plant reveals that each of the five petals has a narrow, stem-like base that creates an unusually wide gap between the petals. Shoots have three small leaves, each of which has three points. The petals, pistil, and stamen are entirely yellow, adding a vibrant splash of color along the hiking trails of Mt. Meakan.