

Japan's history of cultivating tropical orchids really began with the imperial greenhouses erected here in the 1890s. From that point on, orchids were cultivated in earnest for imperial household events. Samples of orchids were imported from abroad and new strains were created here. These greenhouses soon became not only an orchid herbarium, but also a place to train Japanese horticulturists in how to grow these delicate plants. Shinjuku Gyoen continues to thrive as a national center for orchid cultivation and preservation.

Many orchid hybrids were created here. You can find more than twenty such varieties registered in the authoritative *Sander's List of Orchid Hybrids*.

Toward the end of WWII, Tokyo was repeatedly firebombed, and this facility (and much of Shinjuku Gyoen) was badly damaged. Fortunately, the various orchid lines from before the war survived, and today's collection contains a wealth of rare and beautiful specimens.