

Plants (long version)

Mountain and Forest Flora

Ise-Shima's mountains are mostly covered in evergreen forest. Old-growth plant life remains only in the conserved area of the forest of Ise Jingu, the most important *jinja* (Shinto shrine) complex in Japan. Evergreen broad-leaved trees (laurel forest) including species of oak mix with coniferous trees such as Japanese cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*) and momi fir (*Abies firma*). The hinoki cypress (*Chamaecyparis obtusa*) is grown either naturally or in the afforested areas. This timber is used to rebuild the *jinja* complex of Ise Jingu at the ceremony called Shikinen Sengu.

Second-growth forest occupies much of the area in the Ise-Shima National Park. People have used this resource for a long time. Ubame-gashi oak (*Quercus phillyraeoides*) grows here. This is used as a raw material for charcoal. Other trees that can grow on poor soils, such as the Japanese red pine (*Pinus densiflora*), are also found here.

Bonsai (miniature) versions of unusual plants can be seen around the summit of Mt. Asama and Sugashima Island's Mt. Oyama due to its serpentine rock. Rare plants such as jingu tsutsuji (*Rhododendron sanctum*), can also be found here.

Flowering Plants:

In the Ise-Shima National Park, beautiful flowering plants can be seen in every season.

In the early spring, pale purple kobanomitsuba tsutsuji (*Rhododendron reticulatum*), a species of azalea, bloom in a number of areas including the Yokoyama Picnic Site and Tomoyama Park.

The bamboo lily (*Lilium japonicum*), a species native to Japan, grows in mountainous areas and forests with open canopies. Its pale pink flowers bloom around June to July. They are found in areas where the ecosystem is well managed, such as in Isobe Town in Shima.

The yabutsubaki (*Camellia japonica*) is one of the commonly seen indigenous plants in the Ise-Shima area. Visitors can enjoy tunnels of the trees with their bright red blooming flowers on Mt. Konpira in winter.

Coastal Plants:

There are seemingly endless sand beaches in Ise-Shima, such as Shima's Koshirahama and Hironohama. Interesting plants found only in beach areas grow here. Beaches are not generally suitable for plants, because the sea breezes shift sand, strong sunlight dries the plants out, and the salt content is very high. However, coastal plants are well adapted to growing in this environment.

Poison bulb (*Crinum asiaticum*) is a large, one-meter high perennial grass with white flowers that bloom around July and August. Poison bulb has been used as a symbol on posters and stamps for a long time around the Ise-Shima National Park. Hamabo (*Hibiscus hamabo*) blooms yellow at the beginning of August at Gokasho Bay, Ago Bay, and Matoya Bay.

Ocean Plants:

Shallow seas with depths of about 20 to 30 meters stretch from Ise Bay to Sakishima Peninsula in Shima City. Particular species of seaweed and seagrass grow here thanks to the sunlight reaching the bottom.

Hijiki (*Sargassum fusiforme*) and agar weed (*Gelidiaceae*) are found in the rocky coast. Arame (*Eisenia arborea*) and akamoku (*Sargassum horneri*) grow in shallow reef areas, whilst kajime (*Ecklonia cava*) grows in the deeper waters. Seagrasses, such as eelgrass (*Zostera marina*), flourish in the salt marshes and on the sandy beaches.

Rare Plant Phenomena:

Rare ecological phenomena can be seen in Ise-Shima National Park. On Mt. Oyama on Sugashima Island, the Japanese boxwood (*Buxus microphylla* var. *japonica*) boasts red leaves in winter. These form a thick, red carpet on the ground and create a stark contrast to the blue sea. This plant is known as *beni-tsuge* in Japanese, the change of this normally evergreen plant to such a vibrant red color is truly beautiful. There are only a few places in Japan where one can see this wonderful sight.