

## Aso Grassland Conservation Center

### Use of Thatch Grass

Houses with traditional, thatched roofs, were once common in the Aso area. Some locals still harvest *susuki* (*Miscanthus sinensis*) for rethatching roofs every year. *Susuki* grass is abundant on the grasslands stretching across the Aso Caldera, thriving in the relatively cool summers and fall, and low snowfall in winter. The Aso area is known for producing exceptionally high-quality thatch that is robust and durable. Indeed, it was used in the building of the highly-esteemed Aoi Aso Shrine, the first Important Cultural Property in Kumamoto Prefecture to be designated a National Treasure, and the southernmost building in Japan to receive this title.

Today, as a result of the declining number of locally thatched roofs, Aso has been able to take advantage of the quality of its thatch. Responding to high demand in prefectures from Kanazawa to Kyoto, the thatch is used for all manner of repairs, including repairs to important temples, shrines, and other cultural assets. This use of *susuki* grass in the industry has brought economic benefits to Aso and given an additional incentive to sustainably manage specific areas of grassland.