

Silkworm Trays

Wide, flat trays traditionally made of woven bamboo are used as platforms for the silkworms and mulberry leaves in a silkworm nursey. The trays are slotted into racks and lined with paper and mulberry leaves. Silkworm eggs are then sprinkled onto the leaves. After they hatch, the silkworms will spend the rest of their lives eating mulberry leaves in the trays.

While some trays are still woven today, they were most commonly used during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In fact, the trays are mentioned in the official catalog of the Japanese portion of the Centennial International Exhibition of 1876 in Philadelphia, described as “a piece of wickerwork loosely made of bamboo, and forming a very large, rectangular and nearly flat tray...chiefly used in the provinces of Kodsuke [Gunma] and Musashi [Tokyo and environs].”