

【Flowers of the Yunomaru Highland】

From late April until early October, over 1,100 species of flowering plants bloom in the Yunomaru Highland. Its sheltered wetlands and windswept slopes support a distinctive mixture of alpine and subalpine species, many of which are rarely found at such low elevations.

In June, marshy areas like the Ikenotaira Wetland are sprinkled with the colorful blooms of a variety of flowers. These include the fringed galax, or “rock mirror” (*iwakagami*), named for its rocky habitat and round, glossy leaves. Its bright pink flowers are soon joined by stands of deep purple irises, including both the Siberian iris and the Japanese water iris (*nohanashōbu*). The area is also blessed with one of the country’s largest concentrations of Japanese azaleas; in June, a field east of Mount Yunomaru fills with approximately 600,000 scarlet blossoms. Toward the end of the month, the elaborate pink bells of dicentra (*komakusa*), a particularly rare and delicate alpine species, bloom along the southern slopes of Mt. Sanbōgamine.

By July, several lily species are in flower, including the orange, backward-curving blooms of the “wheel lily” (*kurumayuri*). Its name comes from the shape of its leaves, which sprout outward like the spokes of a wagon wheel. July is also marked by the blooming of ethereal “light-snow grass” (*usuyukisō*), a relative of edelweiss.

In August, jaunty towers of fragrant orchids (*Gymanedenia conopsea*) open their small, pink hands to reach in all directions. When colder weather arrives in September, the highlands slopes are still colored by late-season bloomers like the “flower-anchor” (*hanaikari*), named for its pale yellow, anchor-shaped flowers.