

***Ibuki* Juniper on Tobishima**

Tobishima is a tiny island, endlessly washed by whirlpools, visible from this spot just to the right of the Onaruto Bridge. Standing alone and identifiable by a candle-like lighthouse that emphasizes the compact scale of its surroundings, Tobishima adds to the natural beauty of the Naruto Strait. The island has abundant growths of *ibuki*, a plant of the juniper family. The presence of the rare plant led to the island's designation as a Natural Monument of Tokushima Prefecture.

Ibuki grows sporadically on three of Japan's four main islands (Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu); on Tobishima it is found in large clusters around the island's ridge line. It is rare for the species to grow this far north on the Japanese archipelago, especially in such quantity. Any plant growing here needs to be hardy in order to withstand the buffeting of the fierce winds and whirlpools. The grizzled-looking and often unevenly shaped plant is as tough as it looks. Local fishermen used to make its strong branches into fishing-net handles and other items.