

Animal and Plant Life in the Ponds and Wetlands

Animals

- Japanese Fire-bellied Newt (*Cynops pyrrhogaster*)
An amphibian reaching 10 centimeters in length, notable for its mottled ventral pattern of bright red-and-black skin, which contains a dangerous tetrodotoxin. If accidentally handled, wash point(s) of contact thoroughly.
- Japanese Relict Dragonfly (*Epiophlebia superstes*)
About 5 centimeters long, with wings of 3 centimeters. A relict species, or “living fossil,” and the only surviving member of the once-widespread Epiophlebiidae family.
- Scarce Large Blue Butterfly (*Phengaris teleius*)
Forewings measure 18–24 millimeters. Caterpillars produce a sweet nectar and are adopted into ant nests, where they feed upon ant broods before pupating. Critically endangered as of 2019.

Wetland Plants

- Japanese Water Iris (*Iris ensata* var. *spontanea*)
Perennial. Bold purple with yellow stripes on the falls; usually blooms in June. The wild ancestor of many modern iris cultivars grown worldwide.
- Kiseruazami Thistle (*Cirsium sieboldii*)
Perennial. Blooms from August to October, producing magenta flowers with a characteristic droop. Its Japanese name of “pipe thistle” (*kiseruazami*) comes from its resemblance to a *kiseru*, a traditional Japanese tobacco pipe.
- Fringe Sedge (*Fimbristylis dichotoma*)
Annual. Sprouts red-brown spikelets from July to November. Some attribute the native name, which can be read as “sky-piercer” (*tentsuki*), to these skyward-pointing flower heads.

Plants in or near ponds

- Pondweed (*Potamogeton fryeri*)
A perennial pondweed with broad, glossy, floating leaves of dark green tinged with red. Small yellow-green flowers bloom between April and June. The characters used to write “pondweed” (荇菜) mean “the leech’s resting-mat.”
- Beaksedge (*Rhynchospora fauriei*)
Perennial. In the Chūgoku region, this grass-like sedge grows only at elevations of 400 meters or greater. Red-brown spikelets appear from July to September. Its

Japanese name (*ōinu no hanahige*) suggests it is a particularly large species in the genus of sedge called “dog’s moustache” (*inu no hanahige*).

- Fringe Sedge (*Fimbristylis subbispicata*)

Perennial. A sedge that grows in mountain wetlands, with stems of 30 to 40 centimeters that produce only a single spikelet. The native name, *yamai*, means “mountain rush.”