

Six Traditional Flowers of Higo

Hosokawa Shigekata (1721–1785), the sixth Hosokawa lord of Kumamoto, is famous for his reforms of the domain administration system. He was also a highly cultivated man of many interests. An enthusiastic natural historian, he amassed a large collection of illustrated books of plants and animals. Shigekata is said to have started the methodical cultivation of the local specimens that came to be known as the Six Traditional Flowers of Higo (the old name for Kumamoto).

Six Traditional Flowers of Higo

Name	Blooming period
Higo camellia	February to April
Higo peony	Early May
Higo iris	Early June
Higo morning glory	July to September
Higo chrysanthemum	Late November
Higo sasanqua	November to December

Growing and appreciating flowers became a desirable gentlemanly accomplishment, and samurai in Kumamoto formed groups that competed to produce the most beautiful specimens. The criteria for beauty in samurai circles included a pistil that was as large and prominent as possible and large petals that were minimally layered. As shown in the table below, for 11 months of the year at least one of the six flowers of Higo is in bloom. The best places to see them are Suizenji Jojuen Garden and, once restoration work is complete, the gardens of Kumamoto Castle.