

## **Hackberry Tree at Iijima Hachiman Shrine**

The majestic Japanese hackberry (*enoki*; *Celtis sinensis*) tree at Iijima Hachiman Shrine is thought to be more than 500 years old and has long been considered sacred in the local community. The deciduous tree has traditionally been believed to predict the future of Iijima and other nearby villages. In a normal year, buds appear gradually on the branches in spring. The branches budding all at once, however, is considered a sign of impending misfortune for the village. In autumn, all is well as long as the leaves change color and fall little by little. The tree losing all of its leaves at once is thought to be a sign of early snow. Likewise, if the autumn colors appear suddenly on all branches, it is believed that disaster is likely to strike the villages around Iijima.