

Orchids

Amami shrimp orchid / *Calanthe amamiana* / Amami ebine / アマミエビネ

This species of wild orchid is found only on the island of Amami-Oshima. It grows to a height of 50 centimeters in humid, semi-shady areas, particularly at higher altitudes of the broadleaf forests. The leaves are broad, pleated, and bright green. Its flowers vary from white to dark pink, and bloom from March to April in clusters facing downward on vertical stalks. According to recent research, the plant relies on one endemic species of bee for pollination. During the Edo period (1603–1867) this species was a favorite plant of daimyo lords and other elites, who cultivated different varieties. The Amami shrimp orchid was once common to many places on the island, but has suffered from deforestation and illegal harvesting, and is now classified as an endangered species.

Crane-top orchid / *Phaius tankervilleae* / Kakucho-ran / カクチョウラン

This large terrestrial orchid is also known as the nun's hood orchid. It grows to a height of up to 1 meter, much of it consisting of tall stems that bloom with multiple flowers from April to June. Each stem has several dozen flowers, which are white on the outside and dark brown to purple inside. The flowers droop down from the stems, and their shape is likely the source of the plant's name. This orchid species is found in many Asian territories, but is listed as endangered on Amami-Oshima and other southern islands of Japan.

Wind orchid / *Neofinetia falcata* / Furan / フウラン

The wind orchid is endemic to Japan, found in locations from the mainland to the Ryukyu Islands. It is an epiphyte, meaning it grows on rocks and the trunks of trees rather than in soil. It has thin, leathery leaves, thick noodle-like roots that hang in the air, and delicate white flowers at the end of long, thin stalks. During the Edo period (1603–1867) this species was a favorite plant of daimyo lords and other elites, who cultivated different varieties. Today it is on the threatened species list.