

Primroses

Ryukyu marlberry / *Ardisia quinqueгона* / Shishiakuchi / シシアクチ

This flowering evergreen shrub is found at the edges of mountain forests on many southern Japanese islands. It grows up to 4 meters high on occasion, though its trunk rarely reaches 5 centimeters in diameter. The flowers, which bloom in spring, are delicate, drooping down in clusters of white or pink. The round fruit is small and slightly flattened at the top and bottom. It is dark purple when ripe, and edible, with a mixture of sweet and bitter flavors.

Great Ming marlberry / *Myrsine seguinii* / Taimin-tachibana / タイミンタチバナ

This is a small evergreen tree that grows as far north as Chiba Prefecture in central Japan and as far south as Vietnam. It is often found in forests where there are many chinquapin oaks, like those of Amami-Oshima. The trunk is gray blue to gray brown with a purple tinge. The leaves are oblong with pointed tips, and the dark-green upper surface is leathery. The small flowers that appear in spring are pale yellow inside, purple on the outside, and grow in clusters. The fruit is round, about 5 millimeters in diameter, and ripens to a blackish purple by December.