

## Legumes

### **Box bean / *Entada phaseoloides* / Modama / モダマ**

This member of the legume, or bean, family is a large, woody vine that can be found climbing in coastal forest canopies from Africa to Japan. The seeds are widely distributed by sea currents; in fact, their algae-covered appearance at the time of landfall inspired their Japanese name, *modama* (“seaweed balls”). The vines, which can be as thick as 30 centimeters in places, twist horizontally and vertically around the branches of other trees to reach heights of up to 20 meters. In the rainy season they grow brush-shaped clusters of ivory-colored flowers. The box bean is most noticeable, however, for its seed pods, which grow to a length of 1 meter or more in the autumn and hold large, circular brown seeds as wide as 5 to 7 centimeters in diameter. Many of these vines, some more than a century old, can be seen in Amami-Oshima’s Sumiyo area. The vine is classified as endangered on the island, and collection of its seeds is prohibited.

### **Color vine / *Mucuna macrocarpa* / Irukanda / イルカンダ**

This woody vine is found throughout the Ryukyu Islands and as far north as Oita Prefecture in Kyushu. It grows by entwining around large trees, primarily in areas of high humidity and shade, reaching lengths of more than 10 meters. It has unusual reddish-purple flowers that bloom in the spring in grape-like clusters as long as 30 centimeters. Researchers at one time thought that flying foxes, a species of fruit bat, were solely responsible for pollinating these plants. Since the vine proliferates on Amami-Oshima, however, where no flying foxes live, it is now believed that butterflies and wind are involved in the pollination.