

Madders

Kunlun flower / *Mussaenda parviflora* / Konronka / コンロンカ

While this evergreen shrub is a favorite for use in gardens and as a potted plant, it is found in the wild on the edges of Amami-Oshima's mountain forests. It grows up to 1 meter high, with long, elliptical dark-green leaves with a pointed tip. It is noticeable in the rainy season, when small star-shaped yellow flowers bloom. One of its five sepals grows larger than the others and is a conspicuous white, earning the plant the nickname *hankachi no hana*, or "handkerchief flower." Its Japanese name, *konronka*, likens the white sepals to the snow-covered peak of China's mythological Mt. Konron (Kunlun), where gods were said to dwell.

Cape jasmine / *Gardenia jasminoides* / Kuchinashi / クチナシ

This evergreen shrub is found in forested areas throughout East Asia, from Japan and Korea to Indonesia. It grows as high as 5 meters on the Ryukyu Islands, with a narrow trunk, long, elliptical leaves, and star-shaped white flowers that bloom in early summer. Although they are similar to gardenias, cape jasmine flowers have thin petals, usually in one layer and varying in number from five to seven. One theory about the shrub's Japanese name, *kuchinashi* (mouthless), is that it describes the fruit, an oblong berry that does not open even when ripe.