

Other Broadleaf Trees

Needlewood / *Schima wallichii* / Iju / イジュ

This is a tree common to mountain forests of the Ryukyu archipelago and other southern islands of Japan. It is now dominant in secondary broadleaf forests and along forest roads, where it grows to heights of 10 meters or more. The tree has thick brown bark and glossy dark-green oblong leaves with serrated edges that grow at the ends of the branches. The flowers are white and plentiful, and contrast with the dark leaves to showy effect when they blossom between May and July. Their strong fragrance attracts many insects. To the traditional Japanese-style painter Tanaka Isson (1908–1977), the flowers were a symbol of the island during the rainy season. His paintings, including scenes of needlewood trees, can be seen at the Tanaka Isson Memorial Art Museum near Amami Airport.

Southern Japanese laurel / *Aucuba japonica* var. *ovoidea* / Nangoku-aoki / ナンゴクアオキ

This evergreen tree is found throughout mountain forests on the southern islands of Japan, where it grows to heights of 2 to 3 meters. On Amami-Oshima it is found mainly on Mt. Yuwandake and in the Amami Nature Observation Forest. The trunk is green, and the leaves have blunt edges. In spring, the tree's very small, dark reddish-purple flowers bloom on stalks with numerous branches. The bright-red berries that follow are about 2 centimeters in diameter. The tree is monoecious, meaning it has both male and female flowers.

Sweet leaf / *Symplocos microcalyx* / Ama-shiba / アマシバ

Amami-Oshima is the northernmost location where this evergreen shrub can grow. It is found along riverbanks and on mountain ridges in non-limestone soil. The branches are dark brown, and the glossy leaves are oval with serrated edges. The tiny pure-white flowers bloom in the spring. They have many protruding stamens that are more visible than the petals, and the clusters of blossoms seen against the leaves resemble a light snowfall in the forest. The sweet leaf's name refers to the taste of its young leaves.