

Fujibakama Flower Field

One of the most aromatic flowering herbs that bloom in autumn is *fujibakama* (*Eupatorium japonicum*), also known as thoroughwort or fragrant eupatorium. It is regarded as one of the seven flowers representing autumn and is often depicted in Japanese art and poetry. A thousand years ago, thoroughwort was a popular scent for perfumed sachets, scented baths, hair-cleansing products, and incense. Dried flowers were also used in herbal medicine to treat a number of common ailments.

Raising Critically Endangered Flowers

At present, thoroughwort is classified as critically endangered in Kyoto Prefecture and is rarely encountered in the wild due to loss of habitat. In Oharano, it is specially cultivated in a small field for the enjoyment of visitors from late September to early October. In addition to thoroughwort, the field is planted with bush clover (*hagi*), yellow patrinia (*ominaeshi*), blackberry lily, pink dianthus (*nadeshiko*), Korean mint, oval-leaved pondweed, and bellflower (*kikyo*).

Fujibakama and Chestnut Tiger Butterflies

When thoroughwort is in bloom, the flowers attract a large variety of insects. The chestnut tiger butterfly (*Parantica sita*), the only migratory butterfly found in Japan, is particularly fond of thoroughwort nectar. In autumn, the butterflies leave cooler places such as Hokkaido and travel 1,500 to 2,000 kilometers south, using flower fields and other sites as “rest stops” along the way. Many people aim to take photos of the chestnut tiger butterflies in a thoroughwort field, as the large, distinctly patterned butterflies stand out against the pale mauve hue of the *fujibakama* flowers.

Fujibakama Festival

On the weekend closest to Autumnal Equinox Day (September 22nd or 23rd), Oharano hosts the Fujibakama Festival, which features small stalls selling scented thoroughwort sachets, *yomogi* mugwort dumplings, and other local produce.