

Exploring Herbal Medicines across Nara



1. Medicinal Plants Supporting the Medicine of the Imperial Court

- Medicinal Plant Gardens in the Asuka and Nara Periods -

During the Asuka period, the Imperial Court promoted the introduction of medicine and Buddhism from the Asian continent, and began collecting and cultivating medicinal plants as a means to maintain people's health. Let's visit the places where medicinal plant gardens were once located.

① Garden Remains of the Asuka-kyo Capital

The remains of a court garden from the Asuka period. It is suggested that there were medicinal plant gardens, peach orchards, and pear orchards.

● Oaza Oka, Asuka Village, Takaichi-gun



② Motoyakushiji Temple Site

This temple was built by Emperor Tenmu in Fujiwara-kyo. There was also a medicinal plant garden.

279 Kidono-cho, Kashihara City



③ Yakushiji Temple

This temple was deeply tied to medicinal plant gardens. Ten kinds of colorful artificial flowers are offered at the Shunie Hanaeshiki ceremony.

● 457 Nishinokyo-cho, Nara City



④ Shin-yakushiji Temple

Old documents from the Nara period show that it had a temple garden and greenhouse.

● 1352 Fukui-cho, Takabatake, Nara City



⑤ Yakuon Hachiman Shrine

A shrine originating from a medicinal plant garden in Nashihara that lies in the south of Heijo-kyo. It moved to its current location at the end of the Heian period.

● 32 Zaimoku-machi, Yamatokoriyama City



⑥ Ryosen-ji Yakushiyu-den

This spa has its origins in the fact that a medicinal herb bath was built in this area in the Hakuho period to cure the illnesses of the people.

● 3879 Naka-machi, Nara City



2. Medicinal Plants Closely Related to Buddhism

- Caring for the People -

There has been a close relationship between Buddhism and flowers since ancient times, as typified by Ganjin Wajo and the lotus; Kukai and the peony; and Shunie and the camellia. Many of these flowers have medicinal properties. Let's visit these places where you can enjoy the flowers of medicinal plants.

⑦Toshodaiji Temple

Chinese Buddhist priest Ganjin brought lotus root from the Tang Dynasty in China along with many medicinal plants. These plants have been carefully cultivated since the establishment of the temple.

●13-46 Gojo-cho, Nara City (Photo Credit: Asuka-en)



⑧Kikoji Temple

This temple was built by the Buddhist priest Gyoki.

The old document Todaiji yōroku (Todaiji Records) states: "Gyoki built 49 temples and shrines and planted medicinal herbs, dedicating them to all sentient life in the age of corruption".

●508 Sugawara-cho, Nara City



⑨Hasedera Temple

Some 7,000 colorful moutan peonies of 150 different species bloom in full glory. At this temple, known as the "Temple of Flowers", visitors can enjoy various flowers throughout the four seasons.

●731-1 Hase, Sakurai City



⑩Sekkoji Temple

In addition to the noble Buddhist flower moutan peony, this temple has continued to love and protect many kinds of Chinese peony, which includes the winter peony.

●387 Someno, Katsuragi City



⑪Denkoji Temple

Camellias have been highly valued as sacred in Japan. Chiri tsubaki (literally, falling camellia), also known as Mononofu tsubaki (warriro camellia), in the temple ground is one of three famous camellias of Nara.

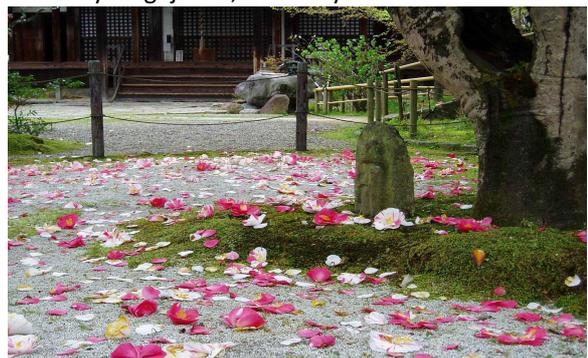
●24 Ogawa-cho, Nara City



⑫Byakugoji Temple

Located on a hill, this temple provides a panoramic view of Nara City. The camellia in the temple grounds is the "five-color camellia", one of three famous camellias of Nara.

●392 Byakugoji-cho, Nara City



3. Japan's Oldest Wakan Medicines

- The Legend of En no Gyoja -

En no Gyoja is said to be the founder of Shugendō, and many legends about him can be found throughout Japan. His roots lie in Nara, where Japan's oldest wakan medicines continue to be used. Let's visit these places that tell the stories of En no Gyoja's achievements.

⑬ Kisshosoji Temple

This temple is said to be the birthplace of En no Gyoja. According to legend, he placed a cauldron in front of the gate and boiled medicinal herbs to save the people from epidemics.

● 279 Chihara, Gose City



⑭ Taimadera Nakanobo

There remains a cauldron that was once used to boil obaku (Amur cork tree) for herbal medicines, a method which was passed down in the secret recipe of the traditional medicine Daranisuke. There is also a peony garden.

● 1263 Taima, Katsuragi City



⑮ Lotus Harvesting Event in Okuda

A group of monks from Kinpusenji Temple underwent ascetic training at the Gyoja-do of Fukudenji Temple, where En no Gyoja and his mother Torame were enshrined. They then offered lotus flowers cut from the Suteshino Pond at Torame's grave, and performed a goma ritual at the Suteshino Pond Benten Shrine before heading to Yoshino.

● Okuda, Yamatotakada City



⑯ Grave of Torame



⑰ Kinpusenji Temple

Founded by En no Gyoja, this temple enshrines the statues of Zao Gongen. It is called Sange no Zao-do (literally, a zao hall on the bottom of the mountain), and also houses a statue of En no Gyoja.

● 2500 Yoshinoyama, Yoshino Town, Yoshino-gun



⑱ Ohmnesanji Temple

Located on the summit of Mount Ohmine (or Sanjo-gatake). It is called Sanjo no Zao-do (literally, a zao hall on the top of the mountain), and houses a statue of En no Gyoja.

● 703 Dorogawa, Tenkawa Village, Yoshino-gun
(Photo Credit: YANO Tatehiko)



4. Medicinal Herbs Embodying Monks' Desires to Save People

- Medication from Temples and Shrines -

Originally, monks and medical care were closely related, as demonstrated by the fact that the Hiden-in (a social welfare facility for the poor and orphans) and Seyaku-in (a medicinal institution) were established at Kofukuji Temple during the Nara period, and by the fact that the role of monk-doctors was clearly defined in the Kamakura period. Let's visit these places that have supported people's health by providing medicines.

⑱ Kofukuji Temple

The Tamonin diary, written by Eishun and others, contains the records of medicines taken and their preparation, which helped the spread of medicine and health practices.

● 48 Noborioji-cho, Nara City (Photo Credit: Asuka-en)



⑳ Hokkeji Temple

Empress Komyo built this temple as the Hokkeji Imperial Convent. There is a legendary bath here where it is said that the empress cleansed a thousand people afflicted with illnesses.

● 882 Hokkeji-cho, Nara City



㉑ Todaiji Temple

This temple is closely associated with medicines due to its connection to Emperor Shomu, who valued medicinal herbs, and Ganjin Wajo, who brought many medicinal herbs to Japan.

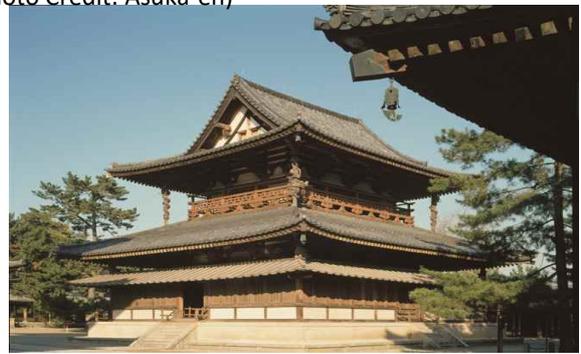
● 406-1 Zoshi-cho, Nara City (Photo Credit: MIYOSHI Kazuyoshi)



㉒ Horyuji Temple

Horyuji houses an old document called the Iyaku Chozai Kosho (Ancient document about prescription of Chinese medicine) from the early Muromachi period, in which 53 kinds of Chinese medicines and 82 kinds of medicinal herbs are recorded.

● 1-1 Yamauchi, Horyuji, Ikaruga Town, Ikoma-gun (Photo Credit: Asuka-en)

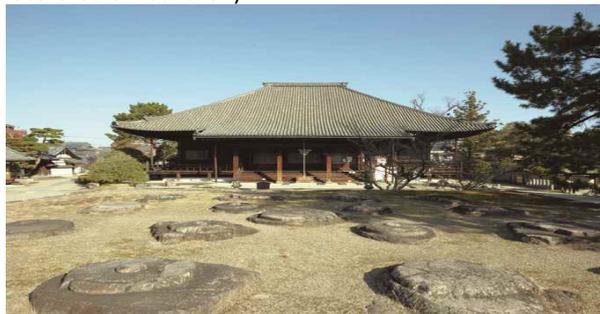


㉓ Saidaiji Temple

Reconstructed by the Buddhist priest Eison during the Kamakura period. There remain many woodblocks relating to the production of the Chinese medicine Hoshintan and dispensing of medication.

● 1-1-5 Shiba-cho, Saidaiji, Nara City

(Photo Credit: Asuka-en)



㉔ Yatadera Temple

Woodblocks relating to the Kingyokutan and Hoshintan medicines remain in the Nenbutsu-do, telling the story of how medicines were administered at that time.

● 3506 Yata-cho, Yamatokoriyama City



②5 Matsuodera Temple

The remaining woodblocks relating to medicines such as Hojutan, Shunmeigan, Anchusan and Hoshintan reveal how medicines were administered during the medieval period.

● 683 Yamada-cho, Yamatokoriyama City (Photo Credit: Asuka-en)



②6 Kongoji Temple

This temple houses 56 woodblocks, prints and other items which reveal that Hoshintan and other medicines were provided at this temple.

● 3-2-14 Noharanishi, Gojo City



②7 Senshukuji Temple

It is said that En no Gyoja made medicines from medicinal herbs and provided them to the people. This led to the development of the pharmaceutical industry in this region.

● 484 Iuka, Gose City



②8 Tsubosakadera Temple

Tsubosakadera has long been venerated as a temple with miraculous efficacy for treating eye diseases, and is famous as the setting of a ningyo joruri, a traditional Japanese puppet play, titled Tsubosaka Reigenki (The Miracle at Tsubosaka).

● 3 Tsubosaka, Takatori Town, Takaichi-gun



5. From Prayer to Medication

In ancient times, the Imperial Court relied on religious services to cure illnesses and ward off misfortune while actively adopting medicine and culture from the Asian continent. Let's visit the medicine festival (chinka-sai) that has continued since the Nara period.

②9 Ohmiwa-jinja Shrine

The Chinka-sai festival established by the Taiho Ritsuryo (Taiho Code) is held here. There is also a medicine path along which medicinal plants have been planted.

● 1422 Miwa, Sakurai City



③0 Sai-jinja Shrine

At the left rear of the worship hall, there is a well called the Kusuri-ido (Medicine Well). Sacred water called Goko-sui originates from this well.

● 1422 Miwa, Sakurai City



6. The Edo Shogunate's Policy on Domestic Medicinal Plant Production

- Morino and Shimoichi Medicinal Plant Gardens -

In Uda, where kusuri-gari (literally, medicine hunting) took place in 611, MORINO Tosuke, who assisted with the policy on domestic production of medicinal plants during the reign of Yoshimune, opened a medicinal plant garden. A medicinal plant garden was also established in Shimoichi. Let's visit these places where medicinal plant culture developed.

③① Akino (Kagirohi no Oka, Manyo Park)

This is the site of kusuri-gari in 611. A monument engraved with a waka poem by Kakinomoto-no-Hitomaro inspires one to reflect on these times.

● Ouda-hasama, Uda City



③② Morino Medicinal Plant Garden

Japan's oldest privately-owned medicinal plant garden, established by MORINO Tosuke in 1729. Some 250 kinds of medicinal plants are cultivated there.

● 1880 Kamishin, Ouda, Uda City



③③ Uda City Historical Museum "Kusuri-no-Yakata"

This is the 150-year-old former residence of the Hosokawa family, a pharmaceutical wholesaler. The objects on display include pharmaceutical signboards and documents.

● 2003 Ouda-kami, Uda City



③④ Matsuyama Road

A merchant town flourished here during the Edo period, with over 50 pharmaceutical wholesalers lined up at its peak.

● Ouda, Uda City

(From Nara Prefecture Landscape Assets)



③⑤ Cuisine with Medicinal Herbs Served at Daiganji Temple

A place of prayer for the Oda clan during the Edo period. Buddhist vegetarian cuisine from the time has evolved into cuisine that uses medicinal herbs.

● 736 Hiro, Ouda, Uda City



③⑥ Gangyoji Temple

UEMURA Saheiji visited Shimoichi Town frequently and developed medicinal plant gardens here at Gangyoji Temple, Horiike and Kabanoki.

● 2952 Shimoichi, Shimoichi Town, Yoshino-gun

