

Kurume History Walks

No.19 Natural Monuments* 2 久留米市の天然記念物 2

* "Monument" is a collective term to refer to cultural properties, designated by the government, of a high historic (castle towns, forts, old houses), scientific (animals, plants, minerals), or aesthetic (bridges, mountains, gardens) value.



高良山のモウソウキンメイチク林



水縄断層

- **Moso Kinmei Chiku Bamboo Grove in Mt. Kora**

(Nationally designated on November 25th, 1974; Miimachi area)

This golden bamboo with green stripes is a mutant species. It was so rare that it used to be reported even in a newspaper during the Edo period (1603-1868) when someone found it.

The entry is prohibited.

- **Mino Danso, Mino Faults**

(Nationally designated on July 28th, 1997; Yamakawamachi area)

Mino Mountains are formed by the activities of the Mino Faults. This type of the active fault moves averagely ten centimeters to one meter per thousand years. These fault scarps seem new. The dissection continuously induces by a steep-sided valley.

The investigation revealed the trace of the four events. As a result, the last event was identified as the Chikushi-no-Kuni earthquake which occurred in 679. It is the oldest, as mentioned in a written record. Its scale was M7 as big as the Kobe Earthquake in 1995.

- **Habitat of Kasasagi, Eurasian magpies**

(Nationally designated on March 7th, 1923; the southern area)

The Eurasian magpies are part of the Corvidae family. This bird is distributed in the southern part of Fukuoka, Saga and Nagasaki prefecture. Originally it came from the Korean peninsula or China.

The reason why it came to Japan is said that when Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who is regarded as the second "Great Unifier of Japan", went to Korea for the invasion of the peninsula, he found a bird chittering "kachi, kachi". He thought that its chittering should bring *kachi* (victory) and he brought it back to Japan. So, it was also called *kachi dori* (bird) and *kachi garasu* (crow).

It is a black and white bird, smaller than a crow, and has a longer tail. In early spring, it builds a nest out of branches and mud on a tall tree. In town, it also makes a nest on a utility pole. It lays five or six pale green eggs which hatch in about twenty days and of which the youngsters leave the nest three or four weeks later.



● **Kusu, Camphor Trees of the Kora-taisha Shrine**

(Prefecturally designated on May 7th, 1964; Miimachi area)

People of the Kora-taisha Shrine had a custom to treat the camphor tree as holy tree because the box, used for holding the symbol of the deity, was made of the camphor. It was a taboo to use that wood for making even the main hall or the daily equipment.

Two camphor trees standing on the approach to the shrine are about thirty meters tall. Very old that these are said to be planted by a head priest of the shrine in the late 17th century. They were venerated as a sacred tree for a long time.



It is very similar to the camellia. However, the sasanqua flower petals scatter, while all petals of camellia flower fall at once. And the sasanqua has fine hair in leaves, young branches, and ovaries.

● **Inumaki, Buddhist Pines of Fukujuji Temple**

(Municipally designated on June 24th, 1978; Aikawamachi area)

These two Buddhist pines are over fifteen meters in height. The force of its growth is strong. The trees seem to be grown as a gate on the approach. The Fukujuji Temple was founded in 1749. Since then, they may have been treated with care.



● **Habitat of Sazanka, Camellia sasanqua in Mt. Nagaiwa**

(Prefecturally designated on May 28th, 1985; Kusanomachi area)

On two hectares of Nagaiwa Mountain, there are several thousands of sasanqua trees with an average height of four meters and a trunk diameter of seven or eight centimeters.

This plant grows naturally in mountains of temperate regions such as Kyushu, Okinawa, and Shikoku. In November, it makes white five-petaled flowers bloom five to eight centimeters in diameter.



● **Shougun-bai, plum tree in Miyanojin**

(Municipally designated on February 24th, 1988; Miyanojinmachi area)

This plum tree is said to be planted by Prince Kanenaga praying for victory in the war in 1359.

He came to Kyushu as the commander-in-chief (Seisei Taishogun) of the Southern Imperial Court to subduing the Northern Court and their supporting powerful families. He encamped in today's Miyanojin, which means the imperial family's army camp.



Since then, for over six hundred years, the tree was treated and protected well by local habitants. In early March, that plum tree blossoms.

● **Akame-yanagi, giant red pussy willow at Yanagisaka**

(Municipally designated on June 22nd, 1993; Yamamotomachi area)

This willow is a deciduous and dioecious tree, native to China, Korea, and Japan. Its name in Japanese come from its reddish sprout (aka-me) and in English comes from its reddish and fine hairy catkins.



The one at Yanagisaka stands alone among Japanese cedar trees at the foot of the Mino Mountains where a stream runs. Local people say that the place-name Yanagisaka comes from this willow (yanagi: willow, saka: slope). It appears over 200 years old, but is still full of vigor and vitality.

● **Kenponashi, Japanese Raisin Tree of Eisho-ji Temple**

(Municipally designated on June 22nd, 1993; Yamamotomachi area)



There are some Japanese Raisin trees in woods of the precincts of the Eisho-ji temple.

This plant is deciduous, and its leaves are egg-shaped. It blooms in June or July and bears small fruits 7 mm in diameter. But the stalks of fruits are fleshier, edible and used for medicinal purposes.

Its name in Japanese come from pear (nashi) for its taste, but in English from raisin for its looks.

● **Colony of Tsutsuji, Azaleas at Kora-taisha Shrine**

(Municipally designated on March 27th, 2001; Miimachi area)

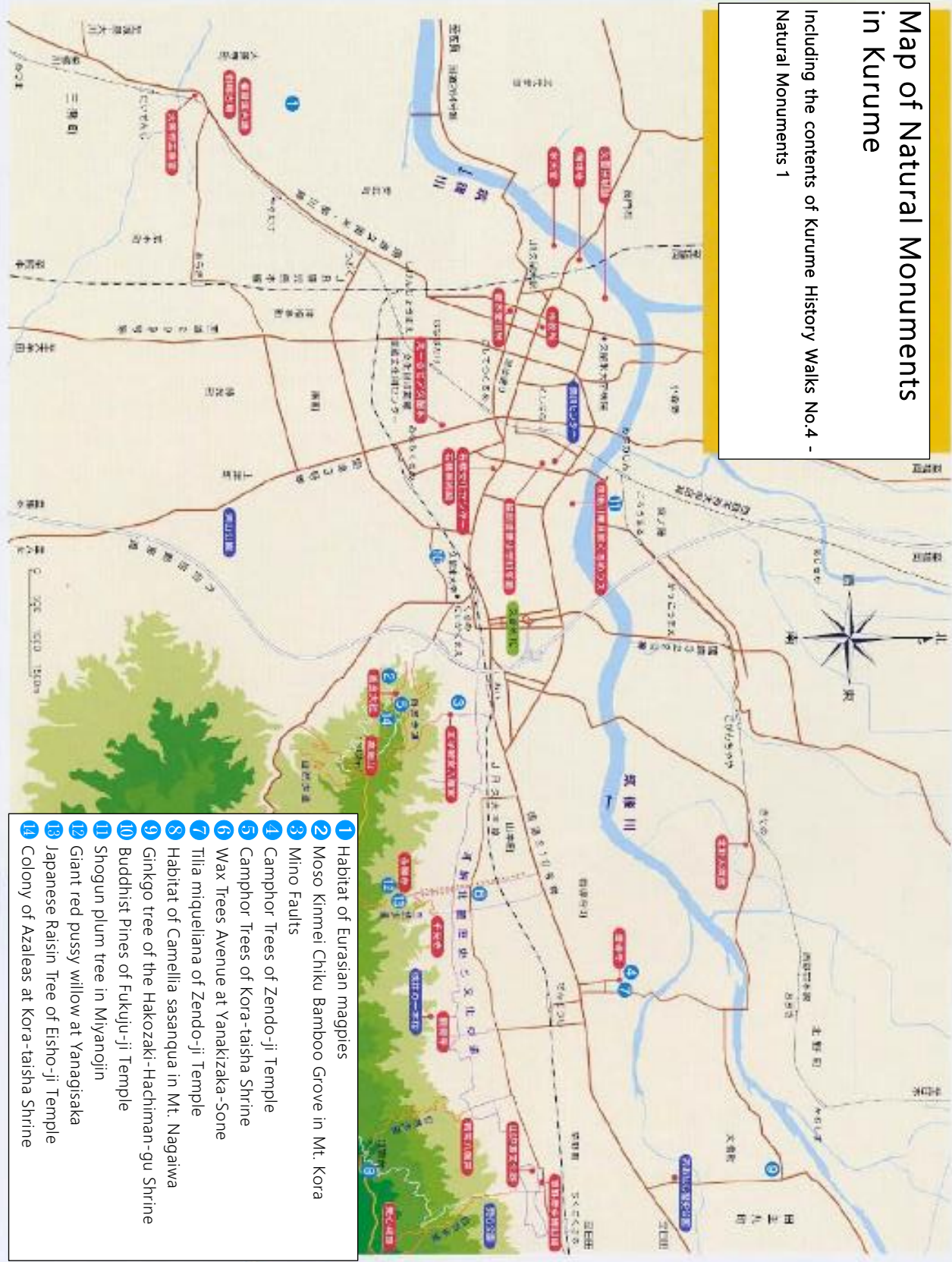


There are many azalea trees on the hillock next to the main building of the Kora-taisha Shrine. We estimate that they are over 200 years old and the original trees of Kurume azalea.

The Kurume azalea was a new garden tree that Sakamoto Motozo (1786-1854), a retainer of Kurume Domain, succeeded to grow by his methods of hybridization after many years of his pursuit. He collected Kirishima azalea seeds in the precinct of the Kora-taisha Shrine and the Bairin-ji Temple, which does not have any old trees of azalea today.

Map of Natural Monuments in Kurume

Including the contents of Kurume History Walks No.4 -
Natural Monuments 1



- 1 Habitat of Eurasian magpies
- 2 Moso Kinmei Chiku Bamboo Grove in Mt. Kora
- 3 Mino Faults
- 4 Camphor Trees of Zendo-ji Temple
- 5 Camphor Trees of Kora-taisha Shrine
- 6 Wax Trees Avenue at Yanakizaka-Sone
- 7 Tilia miqueliana of Zendo-ji Temple
- 8 Habitat of Camellia sasangua in Mt. Nagaiwa
- 9 Ginkgo tree of the Hakozaki-Hachiman-gu Shrine
- 10 Buddhist Pines of Fukuju-ji Temple
- 11 Shogun plum tree in Miyanojin
- 12 Giant red pussy willow at Yanagisaka
- 13 Japanese Raisin Tree of Eisho-ji Temple
- 14 Colony of Azaleas at Kora-taisha Shrine

Cultural Properties Protection Department of Kurume
 Address: 15-3 Jonan Kurume Fukuoka Japan 830-8520 / Tel: 0942-30-9225
 Date of publication: March 31st, 2004 / Translated in July 2020