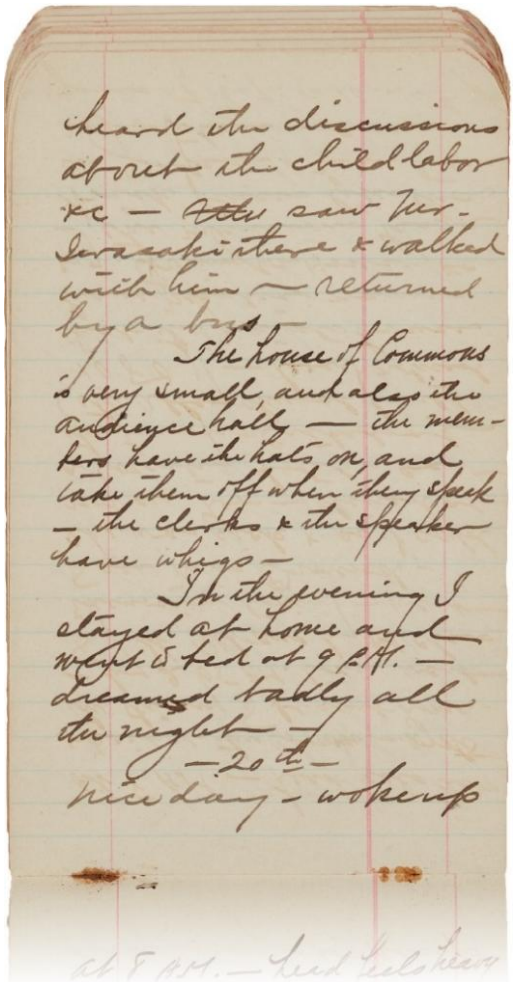
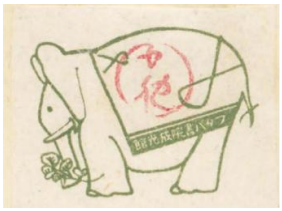
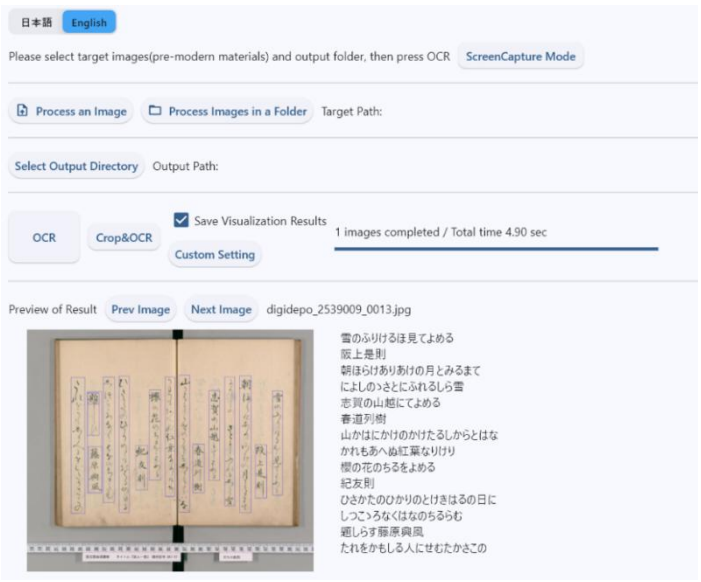
National Diet Library Newsletter

No. 271, October 2026







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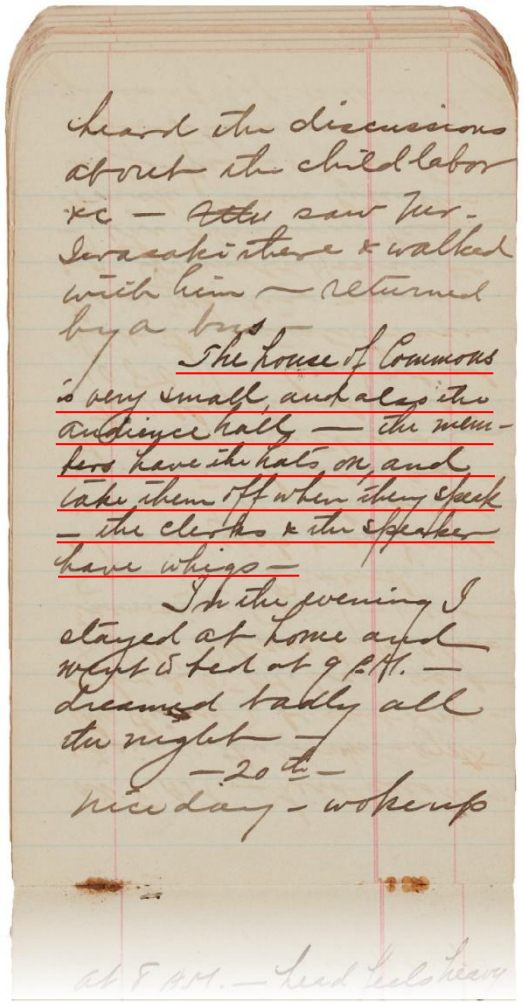
国立国会図書館
National Diet Library, Japan

Selections from NDL collections

Materials in the Modern Japanese Political History Materials Room: The MISHIMA Yataro Papers

Modern Japanese Political Documents Division, Reader Services and Collections Department

This article is a partial translation of the article in Japanese in NDL Monthly Bulletin No. 763 (November 2024).



heard the discussions about the child-labor &c — Also saw Mr. Iwasaki there & walked with him — returned by a bus.

The house of Commons is very small and also the audience hall — the members have the hats on, and take them off when they speak — the clerks & the speaker have whigs —

In the evening I stayed at home and went to bed at 9 P.M. — dreamed badly all the night —

— 20 th —

nice day — worked up

The house of Commons is very small, and also the audience hall — the Members have the hats on, and take them off when they speak — the clerks and the speaker have whigs — (Whigs here is presumed to be a misspelling of wigs.)

Image 1: Diary 2, written in English, June 19, 1891, NDL Call Number: MISHIMA Yataro Papers 5392.

Introduction

The National Diet Library holds a significant number of materials on modern Japanese political history, including the personal papers of politicians, high-ranking officials, and military officers. This article is one of a series introducing materials available at the Modern Japanese Political History Materials Room in the Tokyo Main Library.

These materials on modern Japanese political history primarily comprise documents that were donated by the families of prominent figures and are made available to the public after they have been organized and catalogued by the NDL. We hope that this article will provide readers with a glimpse into the appeal of this invaluable collection, which supports scholarly research in political history and related fields.

Supplement to the MISHIMA Yataro Papers (2024)

(600 items, available since March 2024)

MISHIMA Yataro served as the governor of the Bank of Japan and a member of the House of Peers. He went to the U.S. in 1884 at the age of 18 to study pestology. He returned to Japan upon the death of his father, MISHIMA Michitsune, who was Superintendent-General of the Metropolitan Police, and succeeded to his father's title of *Shishaku* (viscount). He re-entered the U.S. in 1889, obtained a degree from Cornell University graduate school, and continued his studies as a research student there. The following year, however, an illness forced him to give up his career as a researcher, and after touring Europe, he returned to Japan in 1892.

Several diaries from that period are included in the collection and contain accounts of the things he saw and heard, including the weather and the hours at which he got up or went to bed, all neatly written in a cursive style. On June 19, 1891, he visited the House of Commons of the British Parliament and found notable how small the Chamber was, the fact that members of the House wore their hats in the Chamber and took them off to speak, and the fact that the Speaker and the clerks wore wigs. (Image 1)

Checking the minutes of the proceedings of the House of Commons on that day, a proposal to amend the Factory Act was on the agenda.* The Imperial Diet had already been held in Japan, and MISHIMA, who would become a member of the House of Peers six years later, was observing the British Parliament, which was new to him at that time, in a matter-of-fact way.

*https://assets.parliament.uk/Journals/HCJ_volume_146.pdf
"Factories and Workshops Bill" is listed in frame 378 (p. 376 of the material).

Image 2: MISHIMA Yataro

MISHIMA Yataro (1867–1919)
Born in Kagoshima in 1867. He went to work for the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce in 1892 and was elected to the House of Peers in 1897, where he argued primarily on fiscal issues. In 1906, he joined the Yokohama Specie Bank, where he later served as executive director and president. In 1913, he became the governor of the bank of Japan. He died in 1919.

The portrait is from Portraits of Modern Japanese Historical Figures.
(https://www.ndl.go.jp/portrait/e/datas/487/)

(Translated by KUBO Satoshi)

Related content from the National Diet Library Website
Research Navi: Summary of Modern Japanese political history materials (in Japanese)

Articles by NDL staff

A selection of authors and publishers seals
Part 1: Animals adorning colophons

MASUDA Rei, Humanities, Maps, Rare Books and Old Materials Division, Reader Services and Collections Department

This article is a translation of the article in Japanese in NDL Monthly Bulletin No. 769 (May 2025).

Introduction

Have you ever seen an author's or a publisher's seal on the colophon of an old Japanese book? That seal is called *ken'in* (検印) in Japanese, which is a term that generally refers to any seal used as proof of inspection. In publishing terminology, however, *ken'in* refers to either an author's or a publisher's seal, which is stamped on the colophon in order both to facilitate calculation of royalties paid by the publisher to the author and to prevent piracy. Occasionally it is stamped on a piece of paper about the size of a postage stamp, which is then affixed to the colophon. This piece of paper is called *ken'inshi* (検印紙) in Japanese.

Application of *ken'in* was a time-consuming process. There were even those who claimed that it indicated a lack of trust between the publisher and the author. Still, there are many colophons that feature elaborately designed *ken'in* and *ken'inshi*, which seems to suggest that both authors and publishers may have been secretly enamored with the process.

In this article about the *ken'in* and *ken'inshi* found on the colophon of library materials at the National Diet Library, we will explain the Japanese practice of affixing *ken'in* and show you some distinctive *ken'inshi*, including some that feature animal designs.

The rise and fall of *ken'in*

The origins of *ken'in*

There is some evidence that publishers used *ken'in* to fight piracy as early as the Kyoho era (1716–1736), though the practice was not called by that name at the time.[1] About 150 years later, in 1867, FUKUZAWA Yukichi, whose own work had been plagued by pirated editions, began stamping the book *Seiyo tabi annai* (A guide to traveling in the west) with the mark "Copyright of 福澤氏" (Copyright of Mr. FUKUZAWA). (Image 1) This was a groundbreaking use of a stamp bearing the author's own name.

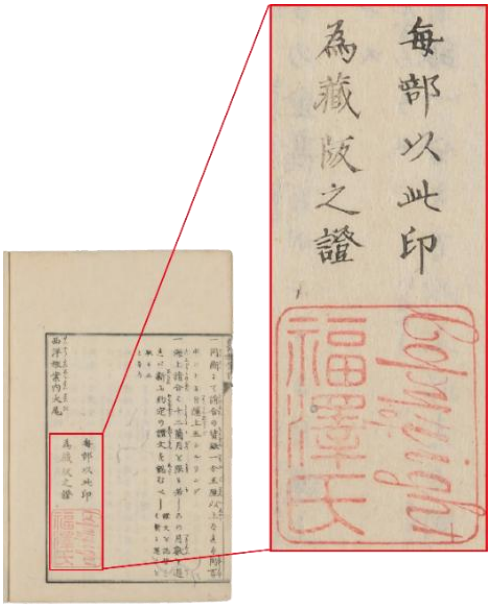


Image 1: FUKUZAWA Yukichi, *Seiyo tabi annai*, Shokodo, 1867. (From Kobe University Library's Sumida Maritime Materials Collection. https://da.lib.kobe-u.ac.jp/da/sc/0100407207/?lang=1)

Copyright holders began stamping their names to colophons to facilitate the calculation of royalties around the end of the 19th century. The first royalty contract in Japan is generally considered to have been for *Danho kien: gaisei shidan*, published in 1887, which was the translation of a French novel into Japanese by KOMIYAMA Keisuke, the first editor-in-chief of the Tokyo Asahi Shimbun.[2] KOMIYAMA signed a publishing contract with MAEDA En, who represented the publisher Hobunkan. The contract states: "KOMIYAMA Keisuke shall affix a label to the endpapers of each copy of this book and the stamp a seal to it,"[3] which can be considered to correspond to the practice of *ken'in*. Indeed, in the colophon of the copy of *Danho kien: gaisei shidan* held by the NDL, a piece of paper has been affixed, and the seal has been stamped across its edge. (Image 2)

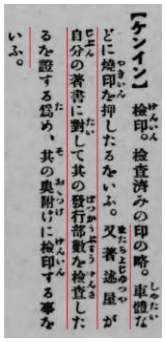
[1] INOUE Muneo, et al., eds., *Nihon kotenseki shoshigaku jiten*, Iwanami Shoten, 1999, p.186, 355, NDL Call Number: UM2-G2.
[2] INAOKA Masaru. "Zohan, Gihan, Hanken: Chosakuken zenshi no kenkyu," *Tokyo toritsu chuo toshokan kenkyu kiyo*, Vol. 22, 1992, pp. 77–82, NDL Call Number: Z21-264.
[3] KIDO Kiyohei, "Shin shiryo ni yoru KOMIYAMA Tenko no kenkyu," *Meiji taisho bungaku kenkyu*, Vol. 12, 1954, p. 134, NDL Call Number: YA5-1156.

Image 2: Erckmann-Chatrian, *Danho Kien: Gaisei Shidan*, Translated by KOMIYAMA Keisuke, Hobunkan, 1887. Available via the NDL Digital Collections. (monochrome image)

The term *ken'in* comes into the vocabulary

When did a seal affixed by an author or a publisher to a colophon come to be called *ken'in*? Although the exact date is unclear, the book *Nihon yakkyokuho biko* (Notes on the Japanese pharmacopoeia) underwent frequent revision over a short period and an examination of copies of this book in the NDL's collection reveals that, whereas the colophon from Meiji 20 (1887) states, "Any copy lacking the publisher's *shoin* (seal of certification) is counterfeit,"[4] the colophon from Meiji 24 (1891) states, "Any copy lacking the publisher's *ken'in* is counterfeit."[5] Looking at colophons of books from other publishers during the Meiji era, however, there are statements such as "Copies without the publisher's seal are likely to be counterfeit"[6] and "Copies without the author's seal are counterfeit."[7] This suggests that the term *ken'in* might not have been in sufficiently widespread use to be considered commonplace.

There are several examples of dictionaries and similar publications from the Taisho era that include a definition of *ken'in* as a publishing term. For example, *Mohan shingo tsugo daijiten* (The model dictionary of new and common terms)[8] is from Taisho 8 (1919), and the expanded and revised edition of *Atarashii kotoba no jibiki* (The dictionary of new words)[9] is from Taisho 14 (1925), but both include a definition of *ken'in* as a publishing term (Image 3).



【ケンイン】検印。検査済みの印の略。事体などに捺印を押したるをいふ。又著述屋が自分の著書に対して其の発行部数を検査したるを証する為め、其の奥附けに検印する事をいふ。

Image 3: UEDA Keiji, ed., *Mohan shingo tsugo daijiten*, Matsumoto Shokai Shuppanbu, 1919, p. 93. Available via the NDL Digital Collections.

The sentence marked with a red line reads, "This also refers to the practice of an author affixing *ken'in* to the colophon of their book to certify that they have verified the print run of their own work."

The decline of *ken'in*

With *ken'in* and *ken'inshi* having become standard practice, they can be found in many books published in the early Showa era. After WW2, however, they began to disappear, and phrases such as "*Ken'in* abolished" or "*Ken'in* omitted" began to appear in the colophon. The abolition of *ken'in* appears to have accelerated during the late 1950s and 1960s. Iwanami Shoten abolished its *ken'in* system in November 1959,[10] while Shinchosha phased it out gradually starting around April 1961.[11]

The main reasons many publishers and authors felt inclined to abolish *ken'in* included growing trust between publishers and authors as well as increased print runs due to the spread of inexpensive, pocket-sized paperback editions.[12]

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[4] IITAKA Yoshiyasu, et al., eds., *Nihon yakkyokuho biko*, IITAKA, Yoshiyasu, et al., 1887, Available via the NDL Digital Collections.

[5] IITAKA Yoshiyasu, et al., eds., *Nihon yakkyokuho biko*. expanded and revised 9th ed., Asakaya Shoten, 1891. Available via the NDL Digital Collections.

[6] MURAKAMI Jo, and NISHIKAWA Kuniomi, eds., *Jinjo shogaku shuzansho*. Vol. 1, Ogawa Shobo, 1893. Available via the NDL Digital Collections.

[7] OOSAWA Soko, ed., *Meika ieiroku*, Shoryudo, 1907, Available via the NDL Digital Collections.

[8] UEDA Keiji, ed., *Mohan shingo tsugo daijiten*, Matsumoto Shokai Shuppanbu, 1919, p. 93, Available via the NDL Digital Collections.

[9] HATTORI Yoshika, and UEHARA Roro, *Atarashii kotoba no jibiki*, expanded and revised ed., Jitsugyo No Nihonsha, 1925, p. 220, NDL Call Number: 516-304.

[10] Iwanami Shoten Hensyubu, ed., *Shashin de miru iwanami shoten hachijunen*, Iwanami Shoten, 1993, p. 293, NDL Call Number: UE57-E57.

[11] ODAGIRI Susumu, ed., *Shinchosha hachijunen tosho somokuroku*, Shinchosha, 1976, p. 427. NDL Call Number: UP21-4.

[12] NUNOKAWA Kakuzaemon, and MIMASAKA Taro, *Chosakuken shuppanken mondo*, Shuppan Nyususha, 1965, pp. 194–196, NDL Call Number: 328.021-N996t. and Shuppan Jiten Hensyu Iinkai, ed., *Shuppan jiten*, Shuppan Nyususha, 1971, pp. 127–128, NDL Call Number: UE2-4.

About *ken'inshi*

Opening books one after the other to stamp the colophon is obviously an extremely time-consuming and troublesome task. Increased print runs brought about the practice of stamping *ken'inshi* and then affixing them to the colophon.

As with *ken'in*, it is unclear when the practice of using *ken'inshi* began. One theory, however, suggests that it originated in imitation of a Meiji-era Ministry of Education practice in which similar pieces of paper were affixed to their publications.[13]

As can be seen in the image below, *ken'inshi* were not stamped beforehand. They were apparently stamped on their edges after being affixed to the colophon.

Shushin shogaku, Vol. 11, Shueido, 1885, NDL Call Number: VG1-H11587.

Examples of *ken'inshi*

Ken'inshi came in a wide variety of designs, including publishers' logos, plants, animals, and decorative patterns. Here are a few examples of designs that feature animal motifs.

a.

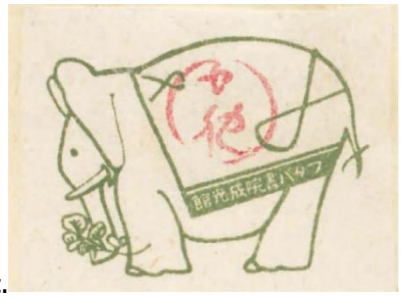
This example features three *kappa* (a creature from Japanese folklore) posing as the three wise monkeys of Tosho-gu shrine.

b.

This design for the publisher Ayu Shobo (鮎書房) features a stylized form of the kanji 鮎 (ayu, a relative of the smelts), taken from the publisher's name. The *ken'inshi* is stamped in the empty space formed by the 占.

Some other *ken'inshi* featuring animal designs

c.



d.

e.

[13] INAOKA Masaru, "Ken'inshi kotohajime: Shoshi (inshi) no iroiro," *Asute*, Vol. 3, 1985, p. 24, NDL Call Number: VG1-1374.

f.

The *ken'inshi* of Kuroshio Shuppan, which has the same name as Kuroshio Current, features a whale motif.

g.

Seiabo's *ken'inshi* features a frog motif because *seia* means "green frog."

Ken'inshi featuring birds

h.

i.

j.

k.

l.

m.

n.

Source of images of *ken'in* and *ken'inshi*

a. SATO Koseki, *Tanukijiru*, Hakuosha, 1953, NDL Call Number: 049.1-Sa815t3.
b. Yan, Vasily, *Shosetsu chingisu han*, Translated by OKUZAWA Bunro, Ayu Shobo, 1944, NDL Call Number: Y994-J15917.
c. KITAHARA Hakushu, *Nanatsu no kurumi: doyoshu*, Illustrated by TAKEI Takeo, Futaba Shoin Seikokan, 1942. Available via the NDL Digital Collections.
d. OKAZAKI Joichi, *Shin kaishaho to shikoho*, Gakuyo Shobo, 1951, NDL Call Number: 325.2-O547s.
e. NAKAGAWA Yoichi, *Jogakusei sosho*, Illustrated by SATO Makoto, Usui Shobo, 1947, NDL Call Number: 児 913.6-N319a3.
f. MASHITA Shin'ichi, *Kofuku no moraru: ikiru koto aisuru koto*, Kuroshio Shuppan, 1959, NDL Call Number: 159-M217k2.
g. MITAMURA Engyo, *Shisei no fuzoku*, Seiabo, 1957, Edobanashi 7, NDL Call Number: 382.1-M533s.
h. YANAIHARA Tadao, *Augusutinusu kokuhaku kogi*, Shinkyo Shuppansha, 1946. Available via the NDL Digital Collections.
i. OKA Kunio, *Kagaku no gendaishi*, vol. 2, Shunjusha, 1957, NDL Call Number: 402-O412k2.
j. MUTO Itoji, *Hari no ana*, Shikisha, 1956, NDL Call Number: 049.1-M991h.
k. TOKUGAWA Musei, *Kari no ato saki*, Shikisha, 1951, NDL Call Number: 049.1-To425k.
l. GOTO Teiji, *Kaiga no shinka*. Zokeisha, 1964, NDL Call Number: 723.04-G85k.
m. SATO Koroku, *Te ni te o totte*, Illustrated by KATO Masao, Mahiru Shobo, 1948. Available via the NDL Digital Collections.
n. TSUBONO Tetsukyu, *Byakuge: Kashu*, Shomotsu Tenbosha, 1939, NDL Call Number: 782-188.

The owl motif

If you look at enough *ken'inshi*, you realize that many of them feature stylized depictions of owls. In Greek mythology, the owl was sacred to Athena, goddess of wisdom, arts, and war. Many of the ancient Greek silver coins known as tetradrachms also feature owls. In Roman mythology, the owl is known as sacred to the goddess Minerva.

While owls were sometimes associated with death and darkness, they were also associated with wisdom and knowledge, and it is this latter association that was the likely reason that they frequently appeared on *ken'inshi*.

(Left) A Koyama Shoten *ken'inshi* stamped by ABE Yoshishige
Source: ABE Yoshishige, *Abe yoshishige senshu*, vol. 2, Koyama Shoten, 1948, Available via the NDL Digital Collections.

(Center) A design printed on the inside cover of Koyama Shoten books
Source: NOGAMI Toyoichiro, *Nomen ronko*, Koyama Shoten, 1944, NDL Call Number: 773.61-N889n.

(Right) An ancient Greek tetradrachm
Tetradrachm: Owl (reverse). Cleveland Museum of Art.
https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1916.992.b

NOGAMI Toyoichiro was a scholar of both English literature and noh theatre, who proposed using an owl as the Koyama Shoten emblem. "The owl is a symbol of Pallas Athena's wisdom, and it was around that time that we agreed to select an owl as Koyama Shoten's emblem from the designs on ancient Greek coins." (NOGAMI Toyoichiro, *Nomen ronko*, Koyama Shoten, 1944, p. 334, NDL Call No. 773.61-N889n.)
The owl's pose in the design used on Koyama Shoten's *ken'inshi* differs slightly from the design used on the inside covers, but the composition is similar.

(Translated by MOURI Tomoki)

References (in Japanese):

- [SHIMOOKA Seiichi?] and AMANO Keitaro. "Wayo shoshi no maku." *Shomotsu tenbo*. Vol. 5, no. 7, 1935. frontispiece, pp. 51–55. NDL Call Number: Z020.5-Sy1.
- "Shuppanjo makushu 1." *Shoso*. Vol. 1, no. 1, 1935. p. 37. NDL Call Number: Z21-163.
- *Hon no mondo sanbyakusen*. Shuppan Nyususha. 1969. p. 59. NDL Call Number: UM11-4.
- MIMASAKA Taro. "Hanken no tojo (Chosakuken noto 11) ." *PIC: Chosha to henshusha*. Vol. 15, 1971. pp. 73–77. NDL Call Number: VG1-815.
- NUNOKAWA Kakuzaemon. *Hon no shuhen*. Nihon Edita Sukuru Shuppanbu. 1979. NDL Call Number: UM11-53.
- Clébert, Jean Paul. *Dobutsu shinboru jiten*. Translated by TAKEUCHI Nobuo. Taishukan Shoten. 1989. NDL Call Number: KC2-E3.
- MATSUMURA Kazuo, et al., eds. *Sekai megami daijiten*. Harashobo. 2015. NDL Call Number: HK2-L7.
- INAOKA Masaru. *Meiji shuppan shijo no kinkodo: Shashi no nai shuppanshashi no kokoromi*. Koseisha. 2019. pp. 36–48. NDL Call Number: UE17-M2.

Articles by NDL staff

NDLkotenOCR-Lite for text conversion of pre-modern materials

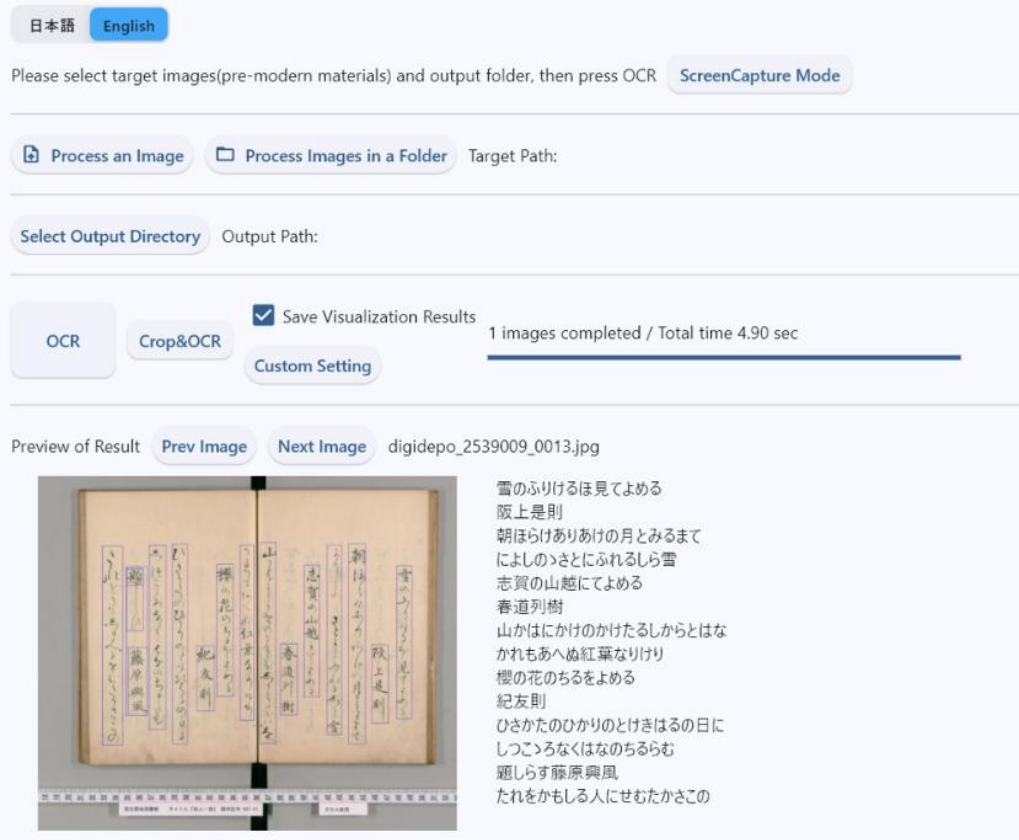
Research and Development for Next-Generation Systems Office, Digital Information Planning Division, Digital Information Department

This article is a translation of the article in Japanese in NDL Monthly Bulletin No. 781 (May 2026).

The Research and Development for Next-Generation Systems Office at the National Diet Library (hereinafter referred to as the "Next-Generation Systems Office") is conducting research and development on OCR (optical character recognition) to convert digitized materials into text (transcription) as part of its efforts to improve access to the collection of the library. By improving OCR technology for transcribing text from images, we are enhancing the convenience of the services we provide. We also strive to make the results of our research widely available to the public, to the extent possible, so that everyone can use them freely. This article introduces "NDLkotenOCR-Lite," which was released in 2024. Some of you may be thinking, "Even if it's publicly available, doesn't it require special equipment or expert knowledge to use it?"

Rest assured!
The Next-Generation Systems Office is also working to develop and release OCR software that runs on even the most basic PCs and can be easily operated using just a mouse. Since the quality of the recognition varies depending on the document, please do not rely too heavily on the results, but we recommend using it for preliminary reading of documents. We hope this will serve as a gateway to discovering new classical texts.

NDLkotenOCR-Lite tutorial page (in Japanese)
https://lab.ndl.go.jp/data_set/lite-usage/



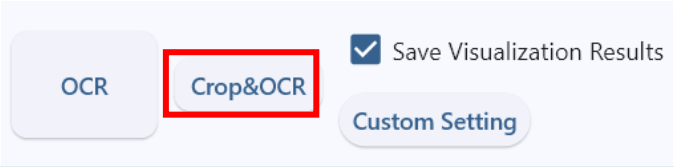
Screenshot of the actual NDLkotenOCR-Lite interface

Document: FUJIWARA Sadaie selected. Hyakunin isshu, copied by [IMAI Akira?], 1812. Available via the NDL Digital Collections.

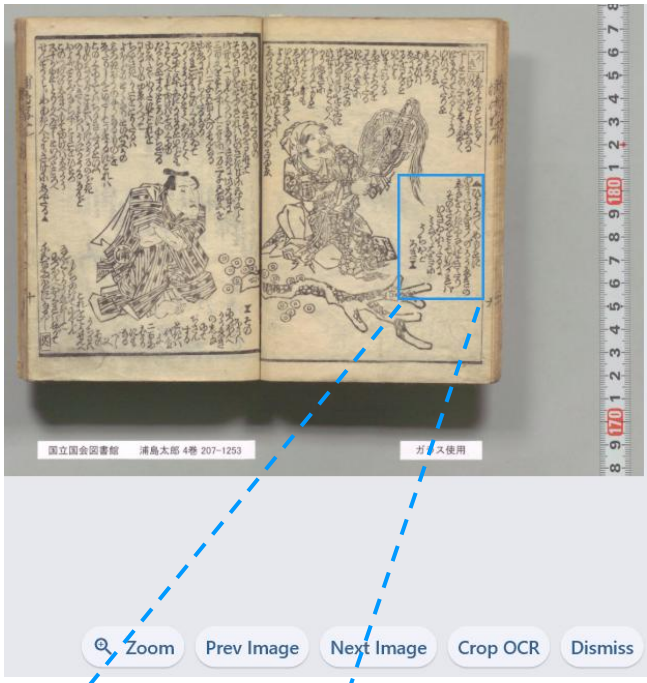
Handy new features!

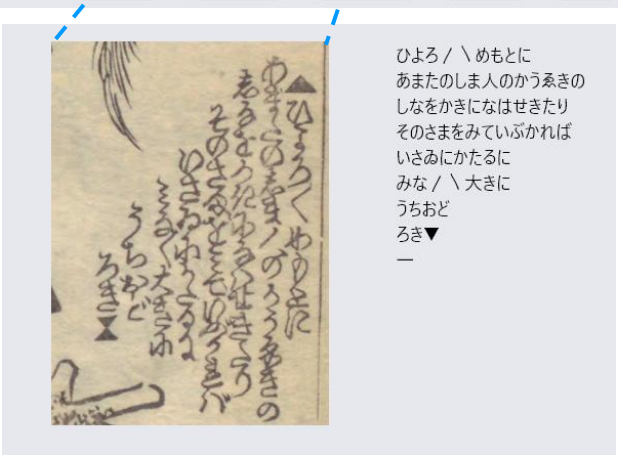
No. 1: Crop & OCR

This feature allows you to drag the mouse over the image you have imported to select the area you want to transcribe, and then transcribe only that specific area.



Push the Crop & OCR button.





ひよろ／＼めもとに
あまたのしま人のかう゛きの
しなをかきになはせきたり
そのさまをみていぶかれば
いさゐにかたるに
みな／＼大きに
うちおど
ろき▼
ー

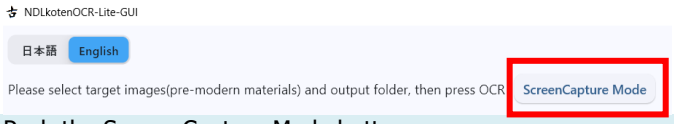
Drag the mouse to highlight the text with a light blue border.

You can display only the text within the light blue border.
*Since the text is read automatically, incorrect results may be displayed.

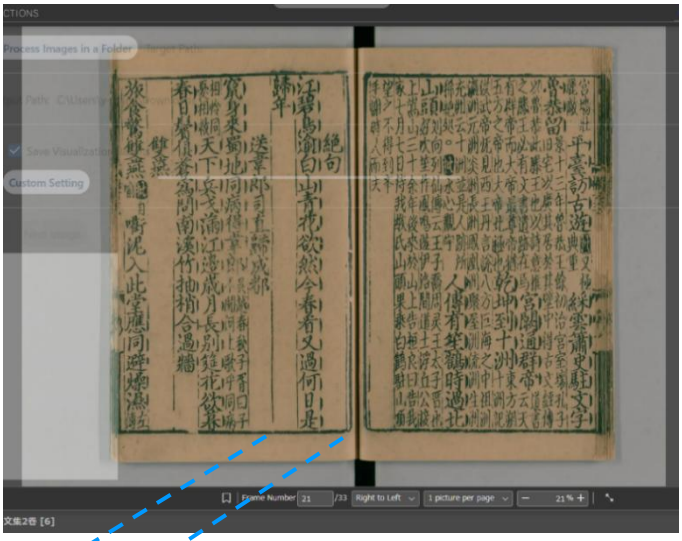
Document: NANSENSHO Somahito II and others. *Urashima taro*, volume 4. NISHIMURA Yohachi (and one other person), 1828. Available via the NDL Digital Collections.

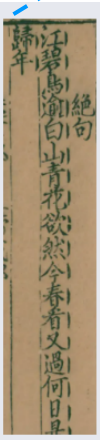
No. 2: Capture Mode

This feature allows you to transcribe text by selecting an area directly on the computer screen displaying the document.



Push the Screen Capture Mode button.





絶句
江碧鳥逾白山青花欲然今春看又過何日昇
歸年

You can transcribe text by selecting an area directly on the screen of the NDL Digital Collections.

You can display the text you have selected.
*Since the text is read automatically, incorrect results may be displayed.

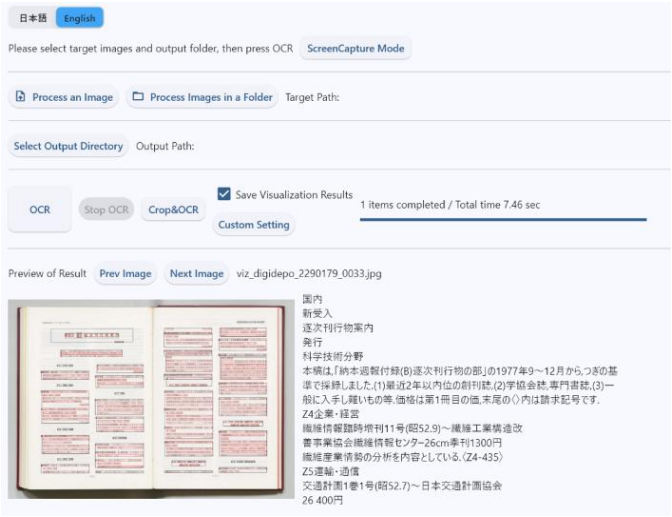
Document: Compiled by Du Fu, Commentary by Liu Chenweng. *Shusenka chu Tokobu Shi*, 20-volume collection, volume 2, number 6, published in Yuan period (1271-1368). Available via the NDL Digital Collections.

(Related Apps) We have also released NDLOCR-Lite

Building on the technology developed for NDLkotenOCR-Lite, NDLOCR-Lite was released on February 24, 2026—a tool capable of transcribing printed materials from the Meiji period onward (including horizontally written texts), such as books and magazines, as well as modern and contemporary handwritten documents! In addition to printed materials, it can accurately transcribe documents such as handwritten manuscripts on manuscript paper—a type of material that NDLkotenOCR-Lite previously struggled with.

NDLOCR-Lite tutorial page (in Japanese)
https://lab.ndl.go.jp/data_set/ndlocrlite-usage/

Horizontally written documents



NDLOCR-Lite transcription results

Document: Kokuritsu kokkai toshokan senmon shiryobu, ed. *Kagaku gijutsu bunken sabisu* 49, National Diet Library, 1978.5. Available via the NDL Digital Collections.

Vertically written documents

NDLOCR-Lite transcription results

Document: WATSUJI Tetsuro. *Rinrigaku*, volume3. WATSUJI Tetsuro, Year of publication unknown. Available via the NDL Digital Collections.

(Translated by MANO Yukako)

Articles by NDL staff

Botanical Adventures—Beyond the Garden, into the World.

Service Planning Division, Reader Services and Collections Department

This article is a translation of the article in Japanese in *NDL Monthly Bulletin No. 785/786 (September/October 2026)*.

Brilliant blossoms and beautifully patterned foliage—throughout history and across cultures, people have cherished plants for the beauty and solace they bring to everyday life. This passion for plants has led people to breed new varieties and to discover, collect, and cultivate rare and unusual specimens.

This article presents a curated selection of exhibits from our current special exhibition entitled *Botanical Adventures—Beyond the Garden, into the World*.

Chapter 1
Horticulture in Edo: From Daimyo (Feudal Lords) to Townsfolk

The history of ornamental horticulture in Japan stretches back many centuries. Ornamental lotus and satsuki azaleas appear to have been cultivated as early as the Asuka period (7th century). The literature of the Heian period (9th to 12th centuries) describes gardens of exquisite design, while paintings from medieval Japan depict the precursors of bonsai.

It was during the Edo period (17th to 19th centuries), however, that this horticulture truly flourished. From feudal lords to townsfolk, people from all walks of life were enchanted by ornamental plants, while enthusiasts eagerly pursued the breeding of new varieties in rare colors and forms.

Chapter 1 highlights Edo-period horticulture and explores the publication of horticultural books, the flourishing trade of plant nurseries, and the passion of plant enthusiasts who sought precious and peculiar specimens, thereby to reveal the many adventures of those captivated by the world of plants.

Section 1
Horticultural Books of the Edo Period

The Publishing Industry Grows and Produces a Wealth of Horticultural Books

The World's Earliest Comprehensive Treatise on Horticultural Practice

Kadan komoku (Comprehensive guide to flower species and their cultivation)

MIZUNO Motokatsu. *Kadan komoku*. 3 vols. Expanded by MATSUI Tanomo. YAMAMOTO Hachibei, et al., 1681. NDL Call Number: 特 1-1782.

Section 2
The People Behind Edo Horticulture

From Townsfolk to Feudal Lords: A Passion for Horticulture

Nurseries So Famous They Attracted Tourists

Ehon Meisho Edozakura (Illustrated guide to Edo cherry blossoms)

Ehon Meisho Edozakura. TSUTAYA Juzaburo, 1795. NDL Call Number: 京乙-370.

Vibrant Plant Markets in Edo

Edo meisho zue (Illustrated guide to famous places of Edo)

SAITO Yukio. *Edo meisho zue* 7 vols, vol. 2. Illustrated by HASEGAWA Settan. SUHARAYA Mohei, et al., 1834–36. NDL Call Number: 839-57.

Landscapes of Daimyo Gardens

Yokuon-en shinkei (True views of Yokuon garden)

HOSHINO Bunryo. *Yokuon-en Shinkei*. Manuscript copy by Baisai Sakai. 1881-82. NDL Call Number: 亥-97.

Section 3
Ornamental Plants in Edo

Edo's Most Popular Plants

Extraordinary Varieties of Morning Glories in Edo, Osaka, and Kyoto

Santo Iccho (An illustrated guide to unusual morning glories cultivated in Japan's three major cities)

NARITAYA Tomejiro. *Santo Iccho*. Illustrated by TAZAKI Soun, 1854. NDL Call Number: 特 1-2715.

One Hundred Chrysanthemum Varieties Grafted onto a Single Rootstock

Hyakushu Tsugiwakegiku (One hundred chrysanthemum cultivars produced by grafting onto a single rootstock)

UTAGAWA Kuniyoshi. *Hyakushu Tsugiwakegiku*. Izuzen, 1845. NDL Call Number: 寄別 1-9-1-2.

An Exhibition of Omoto Cultivars

Ko-omoto nayose (Catalogue of Nippon lily cultivars)

MIZUNO Issai, ed. *Ko-omoto Nayose* 5 vols, vol. 1. Illustrated by SEKINE Untei. 1832. NDL Call Number: 855-21.

Chapter 2
Western Horticulture: The Era of Plant Hunting

While a distinctive horticulture was flourishing in Edo-period Japan, throughout the Euro-American world, intercontinental trade was rapidly expanding. At the same time, given the dearth of native flora in Britain and other countries of northern Europe, people set out across the globe in search of unknown and unusual plants. Travelling to places all around the world, these "plant hunters" collected and brought back to Europe all kinds of plants, which sparked one craze after another in Europe and America.

Chapter 2 highlights these adventures in horticulture, as seen through articles written by plant hunters and published by Euro-American horticultural magazines.

Section 1
Plant-Hunting Expeditions and the Rise of Horticultural Enthusiasm in Europe

Tulip Mania

A Seventeenth-Century Catalogue of Ornamental Plants

Sweerts, Emanuel. *Florilegium Amplissimum et Selectissimum: Quo Non, Tantum Varia Diversorum Florum Praestantissimorum et Nunquam Antea Exhibitorum Genera ....* Amstelodami, Apud Joannem Janssonium, 1647–1654. NDL Call Number: WB32-2(41).

In Search of Unknown Plants

Documenting Himalayan Alpine Flora

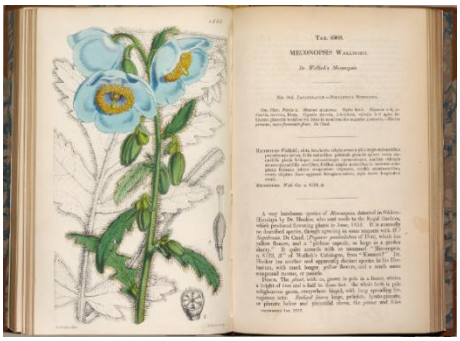
(Detail)

Hooker, Joseph Dalton. *Illustrations of Himalayan Plants, Chiefly Selected from Drawings Made for the Late J. F. Cathcart, Esq.re, of the Bengal Civil Service*. Plates by Walter Hood Fitch, Lovell Reeve, 1855. NDL Call Number: YP51-A239.

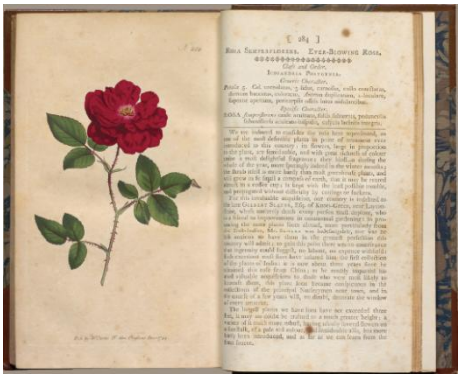
The Botanical Magazine

The World's Longest-Running Botanical Periodical

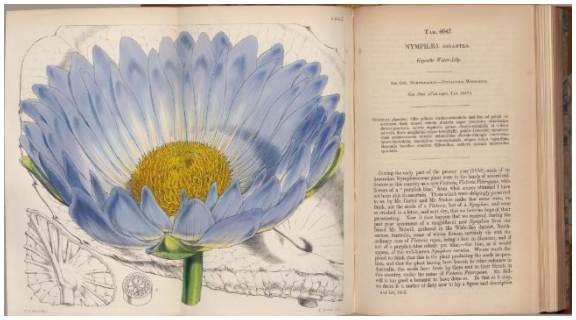
The Botanical Magazine was inaugurated by William Curtis in Britain in 1787 and is still in continuous publication today.
NDL Call Number: Z53-L121



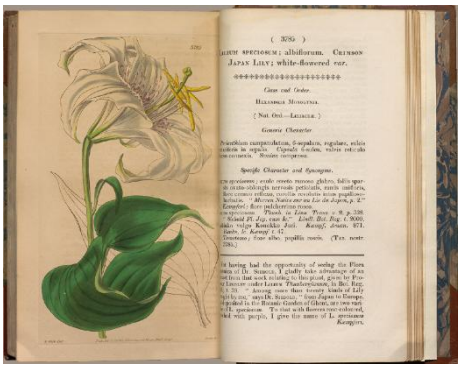
Meconopsis wallichii vol. 78 (1852) Himalayan poppy



Rosa semperflorens vol. 7-8 (1794)
China rose



Nymphæa gigantea vol. 78 (1852)
Giant water lily (Australia)



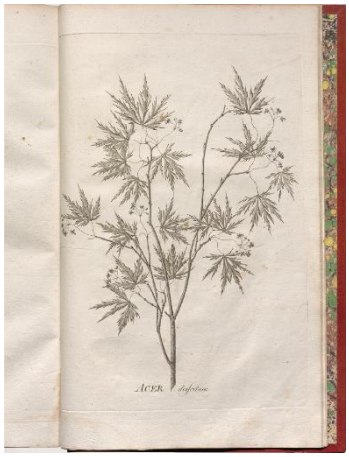
Lilium speciosum; albiflorum vol. 66 (1840)
Showy lily (Japan)

Lilium auratum vol. 88 (1862)
Golden-rayed lily (Japan)

Section 2
Plant Hunters Who Explored Japan

Pioneering Plant Hunters Who Explored Japan

Thunberg's Illustrations of Japanese Plants

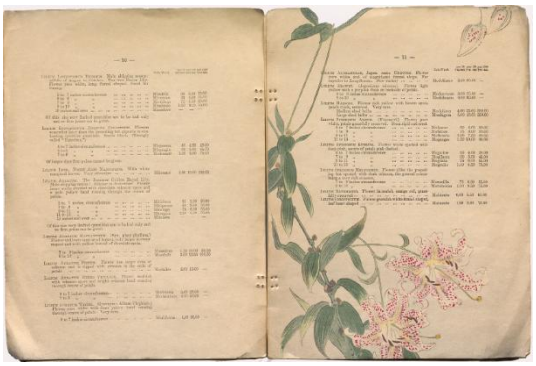


Thunberg, Carl Peter. *Icones Plantarum Japonicarum*. 1794–1805.
NDL Call Number: YP19-85.

The Travels of Robert Fortune

Fortune, Robert. *Yedo and Peking: A Narrative of a Journey to the Capitals of Japan and China, with Notices of the Natural Productions, Agriculture, Horticulture, and Trade of Those Countries*. London, J. Murray, 1863.
NDL Call Number: C-4.

A Commercial Catalogue Introducing Japanese Plants



Boehmer (L.) and Co. *Wholesale Catalogue for 1901–1902 of Japanese Lily-Bulbs, etc*. Yokohama, Boehmer & Co., 1901.
NDL Call Number: 110-89(洋).

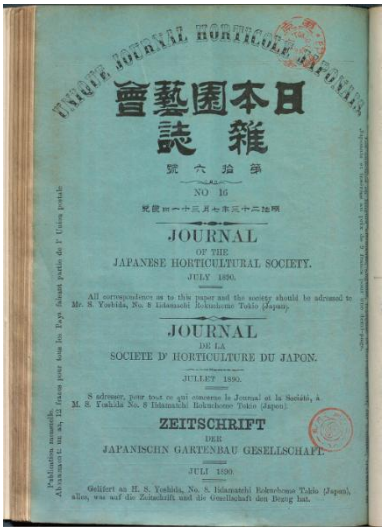
Chapter 3
From the Meiji Era to the Present: Challenges and the Enduring Passion for Horticulture

Following the opening of Japan to the outside world, Japanese plants were exported in large numbers by Western horticultural companies. By the middle of the Meiji era, Japan's horticultural community had itself begun to introduce and market Japanese plants overseas. At the same time, plants and horticultural techniques from abroad were introduced and became widely established in Japan. Horticultural culture cultivated by the people of the Edo period was further expanded through encounters with plants from around the world and exchange with other countries. This adventurous pursuit of the ideal flower by horticulturists and enthusiasts alike has been passed down to the present day.
Chapter 3 highlights the development of horticulture in Japan from the Meiji era to the present, primarily through material from horticultural magazines, which illuminate the passion of people who were captivated by the world of plants.

Section 1
The Meiji and Taisho Eras: The Emergence of Modern Horticulture in Japan

The Proliferation of Horticultural Magazines

Japan's First Horticultural Periodical
Nihon engeikai zasshi (Journal of the Japanese Horticultural Society)



Nihon Engeikai Zasshi. Edited by Nihon Engeikai. No. 16. Jul. 1890.
NDL Call Number: 雑 40-1.

Practical Horticulture by the Influential Horticulturist Ishii Yugi
Jissai Engei (Practical horticulture)

Jissai Engei. Edited by Seibundo Shinkosha. Vol. 2, No. 1. Jan. 1927.
NDL Call Number: 雑 40-13.

Section 2
Showa: The Development of Modern Horticulture in Japan

Original Botanical Illustrations by YAMADA Toshio, Botanical Artist Associated with MAKINO Tomitaro

ISHII Yugi's Study of Camellias and Sasanquas
Nihonsan Tsubaki no Zu (Illustrated camellias of Japan)

ISHII Yugi, ed. *Nihonsan Tsubaki no Zu*. Illustration by YAMADA Toshio. Revised by MAKINO Tomitaro. ISHII Yugi. [194-]. NDL Call Number: YR8-116.

Section 3
Horticulture Today

Chapter 3 introduces a number of adventures in horticulture and related topics from the Meiji era to the present.

- Thirty Thousand Visitors to the Chrysanthemum Exhibition at the Paris Exposition
- A Prewar Export Catalogue for Overseas Markets
- The Development of Double-Flowered Petunia Cultivars
- Taking BONSAI to the World!
- Horticulture: The Favorite Hobby of Japan's Salarymen
- The International Garden and Greenery Exposition Draws Huge Crowds
- "Gardening" Becomes One of the Year's Top Buzzwords
- In Pursuit of the Blue Rose
- Hellebores in the Reiwa Era
- Edo Horticulture Today

Exhibition Information

Tokyo Venue

Venue: Exhibition Hall on the 1st floor of the Tokyo Main Library Annex, National Diet Library
Dates: Friday, October 2, to Saturday, October 31, 2026
Closed: Sundays, public holidays, and Wednesday, October 21
Hours: 10:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m. on weekdays, until 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays

Kansai Venue

Venue: Auditorium on the B1 floor of the Kansai-kan, National Diet Library
Dates: Friday, November 13, to Saturday, November 28, 2026
Closed: Wednesday, November 18; Sunday, November 22; and Monday, November 23
Hours: 10:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m., until 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, November 15

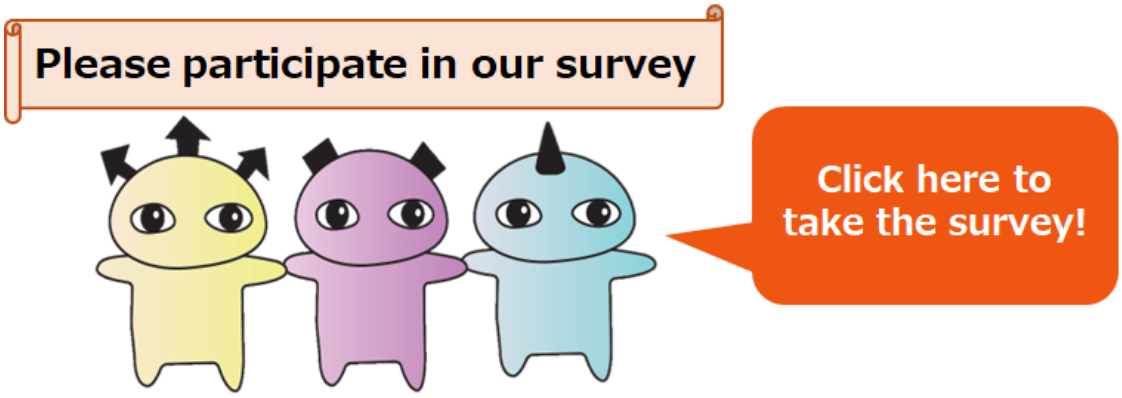
Website (in Japanese):
https://www.ndl.go.jp/en/event/exhibitions/exhibition2026

(Translated by TOMITA Joji)

News from NDL

FY2026 Survey about the Web NDL Authorities

Acquisitions Administration and Bibliographic Control Division, Acquisitions and Bibliography Department



The National Diet Library, Japan (NDL), is now conducting a survey about the Web NDL Authorities.
The Web NDL Authorities is a service that patrons can use to search and download authority data created by the NDL.

The Web NDL Authorities
https://id.ndl.go.jp/auth/ndla
Anyone is welcome to respond to this survey. All feedback is greatly appreciated.

URL: https://enquete.ndl.go.jp/712515?lang=en
Period: From Sept. 1 to Nov. 30, 2026

Notes:

- The survey takes approximately 5 to 10 minutes to complete.
- Multiple respondents from the same organization are welcome. Individual responses are encouraged, and there is no need to consolidate opinions within your organization.
- Please note that responses will be analyzed in aggregate, and no individual respondent or response will be identifiable.

Selected list of articles from NDL periodicals

The NDL Monthly Bulletin No. 785/786, September/October 2026

If you click the volume number of each issue, you can read the full-text of NDL Monthly Bulletin. The text is provided in PDF format (in Japanese).

No. 785/786, September/October 2026 (PDF: 16.1 MB)

- <Book of the month – from NDL collections>
  Watakushi no mita gendai no daisakkyokusha: Composers portrayed in words by YAMADA Kosaku
- Exhibition: Botanical Adventures – Beyond the garden, into the world.
- Lecture: "Magpie: Looking for Story Seeds Around Us" by British author Frances Hardinge
  Frances Hardinge and SAMBE Ritsuko
- <Travel writing on world libraries>
  Libraries in Mongolia
- <Tidbits of information on NDL>
  A library in the National Diet Building
- <Books not commercially available>
  Koremade no 100nen, korekara no 100nen: Omiya bonsaimura kaison 100shunen kinenshi
- <NDL Topics>