

# The Flower Cultivation Ban in Japan near the End of World War II

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## Summary

By the Edo era, Japan had become famous throughout the world for its cultural tradition of flowers and ornamental plants. But some fifty years later, near the close of World War II, the cultivation of flowers was prohibited in Japan, and those who raised such plants came to be ridiculed as enemies of the state. The facts regarding the enforcement of this ban near the end of the War in the Pacific have been investigated using the records kept by Chiba Prefecture, Hyogo Prefecture, Osaka Prefecture, and Kyoto Prefecture. In Chiba, there was a complete ban enforced, while in Hyogo and Kyoto Prefectures, depending on the wishes of the military and government, cultivation was allowed in certain cases. It has been found that, while the extent of the measures taken varied from place to place throughout the country, beginning in 1940, in the name of increasing food production, increasingly strict orders restricting cultivation of such plants were handed down one after another. However, the largest cause of the food shortage was the lack of a labor force, and thus the establishment of restrictions on planting (i.e., the ban on growing flowers and ornamental plants) did not result in an increase in food production.

In this hostile environment, those who carried on the ornamental plant tradition, those who were ready to face the ridicule of being labeled enemies of the nation, created in many forms and left for us the spirit of this cultural heritage. That they were able to do this can in fact be thought of as an expression of the universal value of all human life and mankind itself - mankind, the cultivator of flowers.

**Key Words:** flower cultivation ban, ornamental plants

## Introduction

In Japan during the Edo period, gardening was a strong part of the national tradition, and many common people enjoyed this cultural pastime (Fortune, 1969). For example, while city dwellers enjoyed the beauty of chrysanthemum dolls and chrysanthemum flowerbeds, this created a thriving industry for the raising of these flowers in rural areas (Minakuchi-choshi Hensan-iinkai, 1960).

The large-scale production of cut flowers and ornamental plants in Japan began in the Meiji period, in places such as the Boso Peninsula, where the climate is favorable to growing flowers. From the Taisho period to the beginning of the Showa period, these areas formed the leading flower cultivation regions. In the Kansai region, the production of chrysanthemums, carnations, roses and flower pots began in various places, including Hyogo, Osaka and Nara prefectures. In Shiga prefecture also, the production of flowers and ornamental plants gradually began, and by 1940, carnations were being cultivated in a greenhouse of area greater than 1000 square meters in Kusatsu (Shiga-ken Norin-bu Nosanfukyu-ka Henshu-iinkai, 1986).

However, beginning in about 1935, as Japan began to occu-

py many of its neighboring countries, the Japanese Imperial government began putting into place prohibitions on the production of flowers, and in so doing, eventually robbed the Japanese people of a favorite hobby. In fact, the situation became so adverse that people who raised flowers came to be labeled as enemies of the nation.

Since 1945 and Japan's defeat in World War II, it has experienced extraordinary reconstruction and development. For the past 50 years, Japan has existed without any connection to war, and with its citizens living what appear to be quite peaceful lives, flowers have seem to again become a strong part of the national tradition. However, while it may appear that Japan is a world leader in the culture of flowers, there is some question as to the degree to which flowers are rooted in the hearts of Japanese people and to what extent the universal value of the cultivation of flowers is commonly recognized.

As the interest in the relationship between flowers and people grows (Hana no Banpaku Kokusai Symposium Kikaku-iinkai, 1988), in examining specifically the relation between Japanese people and the cultivation of flowers, it is necessary to consider the "flower ban" that existed in its very recent history. In this paper, we study the situation regarding the production of ornamental plants at the beginning of the Showa period and the action taken by the Japanese government in establish-

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ing its ban during the Second World War (i.e. the War in the Pacific). We do this by examining the written records of people involved in the industry and culture of flowers at that time.

### The Situation Regarding the Production of Flowers in Chiba Prefecture

The production of ornamental plants in Chiba prefecture began on the Boso Peninsula. According to the publication *Boshu Flowers*, compiled by the Awa Ornamental Gardening Cooperative, around the middle of the Edo period, narcissus raised on the Boso Peninsula were sold in Tokyo (at the time, known as “Edo”). According to Chiba prefectural farming statistics, the production of ornamental plants there began with lilies. In 1908, there was an area of 385,000 square meters used for the cultivation of lilies, and by 1912, this had been expanded to 410,000 square meters (Chiba-ken Norin-bu, 1917-1940). On the Boso Peninsula in 1920, the first cooperative for ornamental plant producers in Japan was established (Awa Kaki-Engei Kumiai-rengokai Henshu-iinkai, 1978). In 1931, for the first time cultivation of plants other than lilies reached a high enough level to be included in the farming statistics, and the total area devoted to the production of orna-

mental plants had grown to 812,000 square meters. In 1938, this figure had reached 2,982,000 square meters, the largest pre-war figure (see Table 1). In 1939, a wartime plan for the increase of food production was created, and as a result, the area devoted to the raising of ornamental plants began to decline. In fact, statistics of this nature do not even exist for the period from 1941 until the end of the war (see Table 1). The following excerpt regarding the situation as it existed in 1942-1943 is taken from *Boshu Flowers*: “With the increase of the food supply as a primary governmental policy, the quota system for food production was made increasingly strict. In this context, flowers came to be regarded as useless crops, and their planting became prohibited. In most prefectures, the presence of a few seedlings and small plants was tolerated, but the restrictions were stricter in some areas. In particular in Chiba and Nagano prefectures, all such plants were forcibly removed, and even in the case that a farmer kept a few sprouts or seedlings in the corner of a field, he came to be regarded as an enemy of the nation.”

A similar situation is described in the 1979 publication of *Boso Flowers* (Boso no Hana Henshu-iinkai, 1979): “During 1942-1943, as it began to appear that the war would continue

**Table1.** The situation regarding the production of flowers in Chiba Prefecture

	Planted area of lilies	Planted area of other plants	Total area	Remarks
1908	385,000	m2		
1909	385,000			
1910	337,000			
1911	405,000			
1912	410,000			
1913	371,000			
1914	228,000			The First World War broke out.
1915	331,000			
1916	318,000			
1917	313,000			
1918	164,000			
1919	63,000			
1920	112,000			The first cooperative for ornamental plant producers in Japan was established.
1921	119,000			
1922	82,000			
1923	121,000			
1924	165,000			
1925	183,000			
1926	252,000			
1927	320,000			
1928	311,000			
1929	287,000			
1930	349,000			
1931	374,000	438,000	812,000	
1932	389,000	1171,000	1560,000	
1933	440,000	1234,000	1674,000	
1934	442,000	1362,000	1804,000	
1935	444,000	1663,000	2107,000	
1936	421,000	1812,000	2233,000	
1937	464,000	2227,000	2691,000	The war with China broke out.
1938	367,000	2615,000	2982,000	The National Mobilization Law was put into effect.
1939	368,000	2417,000	2785,000	The Wartime plan for the increase in production of food crops was laid out.
1940	235,000	2056,000	2291,000	
1941	----	----	----	The statistics of agricultural production do not even exist for the period from 1941 until the end of the war.
1942	----	----	----	The cultivation of flowers was prohibited under the Food Management Policy.

for a prolonged time, first the right to plant flowers was taken away from everyone except professional growers. Eventually an altogether ban was put into place, as flowers came to be deemed worthless and unnecessary. In Chiba and Nagano prefectures, flowers were a banned crop, and their complete removal was enforced. For example, suppose a person spent years painstakingly raising chrysanthemums, and he wished to save just a single plant, which he planted under a persimmon tree. If the presence of just a single such plant became known, it would be removed from the ground and destroyed. It was almost like losing a child. This is how the people familiar with the situation at the time describe it. In a time of one or two years, flowers all but disappeared.”

Kiyoshi Ishikawa of Kamogawa city states, “In 1943, a ban on the cultivation of flowering plants was handed down by the prefectural government...and from that time, everything—from the preservation of seeds to the cultivation of plants—was strictly controlled. The situation was particular severe in Chiba and Nagano prefectures, where the ban was absolute. There, unannounced inspections were made, and *any* ornamental plants found at that time were removed.” in *A Life Devoted to the Improvement of Flowers* (Chiba-ken Nogyo-kodokumiai Henshu-iinkai, 1972). There is a quote regarding Wada-machi attributed to Shichirohei Mamiya (Wada Shogakko Shakai-ka Kenkyu-bu, 1983) that describes a very similar situation.

The stories we hear from the time of the flower ban, exemplified by the above, are truly like non-fiction literature, perhaps like something we would read in a children’s story, with people fearing that a few precious plants may be discovered and secretly hiding seeds and bulbs (Tsuchida, 1985; Mochizuki, 1985; Tamiya, 1972).

## The Background and Gradual Institution of the Flower Ban

Beginning in 1937, when war with China broke out, there was a chronic food shortage in Japan. In April of the following year, the National Mobilization Law was put into effect, and a much larger percentage of fertilizer began to be supplied to food crops. In an indirectly related development, “agricultural control” began. In 1939, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry laid out a wartime plan for the increase in production of food crops (see Table 2). However, the rice crop in 1940 was very poor, and the food shortage became worse. Then, after the poor autumn Korean rice crop, even with the addition of the Taiwanese harvest, there was a marked decrease in the amount of rice brought into Japan from the surrounding occupied territories. Initially, this shortage was made up for by imported rice, but as the war grew longer, it became necessary to reevaluate the plan for self-sufficient food production. With this background, in 1940, general guidelines regarding the regulation of farmland use and the planting of crops were drawn up. These guidelines were the prototype of the subsequent Farmland Planting Regulations. They stipulated an increase in the production of rice within Japan. The goal for 1940 was 12,808,000 cubic meters, but despite this increased expectation, the actual harvest actually declined in this year. In 1940, only 86% of the goal was realized, and in 1941, due to poor weather, the harvest was worse than the previous year by 105 cubic meters, and only 77% of that year’s goal was realized. The production in 1941 was 195 cubic meters less than the average of the five previous years, and as a result of the continued decline in production, the “Ten Year Plan for Increased Production of Principal Food Crops” was established. In part, the proposed increase in production was to be realized by extending the definition of arable land.

If we consider the fluctuation in the total cultivated acreage

**Table2.** Chronology on the flower cultivation ban in Japan near the end of World War II

1937.	The Outbreak of the war with China
1938. Apr.	The proclamation of the National Mobilization Law
1939.	The enactment of the Wartime plan for the Increase in production of food crops
1940.	The General guidelines regarding the regulation of farmland use and the planting of crops
1941. Feb.	The proclamation of the Temporary Farmland Management Ordinance (Imperial Ordinance 114)
Mar.	The Great Amendment for the National Mobilization Notification from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to the authority in each local region.( Agricultural Administrative Notification 5267) “With this notification, a number of plants, including watermelons, peanuts and ornamental plants and flowers, became restricted crops.”
Oct.	The enactment of Farmland Planting Regulations (Agricultural Administrative Ordinance 86) Announcement of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Announcement 788) “These regulations specified mulberries, tea, peppermint, tobacco, fruit trees and ornamental plants and flowers as restricted crops.”
Dec.	The declaration of war on the United States. The announcement of The Agricultural Production Regulatory Ordinance (Imperial Ordinance 1233)
1942. Feb.	The announcement and enactment of The Food Management Policy
1943. Jun.	The first Emergency Guidelines for Increased Food Production
Aug.	The second Emergency Guidelines for Increased Food Production
1944. Jul.	The revisions of the Farmland Planting Regulations. The announcement of The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Notification 813 “This notification specified ornamental plants and flowers, watermelons, ornamental/landscape trees and strawberries as restricted crops.”
1945. Aug.	The end of the war

in the country, this figure increased until 1939, but after this time, it declined year-by-year. This decline became particularly pronounced beginning in 1943, as a result of both an increase in wasteland acreage and simply the abandonment of arable land. Thus in order to realize the plan of increasing food production (or at least maintaining current levels) by increasing the acreage of cultivated land, it became necessary to in fact tighten the regulations placed on presently cultivated land. In addition, as battle fronts continued to expand, and the number of available laborers continued to decline, in 1943 the Farm Production Regulation Policy was suddenly pushed ahead into its final form. One of the results of this was stricter application of the ordered management of temporary farmland (begun in February of 1941) (Tanaka, 1979).

As reported by the Tokyo Nichi-nichi newspaper on January 31, 1941, the Great Amendment for the National Mobilization was brought before the Parliament. Its purpose was to tighten the regulation of commodities within the country. On February 1, the Temporary Farmland Management Ordinance (Imperial Ordinance (Tokyo Nichi-nichi Newspaper, 1941)) was put into effect. On March 24, notification was sent from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to the authority in each local region in this regard (Agricultural Administrative Notification 5267) (Table 2). With this notification, a number of plants, including watermelons, peanuts and ornamental plants and flowers, became restricted crops. Some of the aims of the Temporary Farmland Management Ordinance were to enforce compulsory planting, and to make possible, as the need arose, the singling out of certain types of plants and regions for regulation and to allow for the limitation and/or prohibition of certain crops.

The developments described above came together to be enacted as the Farmland Planting Regulations (October, 1941). These regulations were enacted for the purpose of replacing restricted crops (mulberries, tea, peppermint, tobacco, fruit trees and ornamental plants and flowers) with rice and barley. In this manner, the planting of restricted crops was decreased, but in fact the total area devoted to rice and barley also decreased. The plant which replaced these, and whose production was sharply increased as a result, was the sweet potato. In his book *The Nation and Society During the Fascist Period* [13], Manabu Tanaka discusses issues of total acreage regarding the planting of mulberries, tea, peppermint, tobacco and fruit trees, but he does not give any information regarding ornamental plants and flowers.

As the crop failure became more apparent, at an Emergency Food Shortage Cabinet meeting on September 26, 1941, stricter planting regulations were fixed, and on October 16, the Agricultural Planting Regulations were announced (Table

2). The detailed content of these regulations was made public through an announcement of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Announcement 788) (Table 2). These regulations specified mulberries, tea, peppermint, tobacco, fruit trees and ornamental plants and flowers as restricted crops. They were put into effect on October 25 (Nochi-Seido Shiryoshu Shusei-iinkai, 1972).

On December 8, 1941, Japan declared war on the United States, and amid reports of early victories, on December 27, the Agricultural Production Regulatory Ordinance (Imperial Ordinance 1233) was announced. The authority to uphold this ordinance was given to local agricultural organizations, who were to enforce it with the purpose of establishing agricultural production plans. The content of such plans was to be twofold: the increase in production of food crops and the increase of cultivated acreage (Table 2). Ten days later (January 7, 1942), the general guidelines for the management of food production were decided by the Cabinet, and on February 21, the Food Management Policy (Table 2) was announced and enacted. The plans supported by this policy were initially directed at small groups of farmers, and for this reason the responsibility for the failure to meet quotas was placed collectively on these local groups. In this way, the force that the government could exercise over individual farmers was made one step stronger. According to Manabu Tanaka, this local regulation eventually evolved into one in which power was exerted directly on individual farmers, who were thereby forced to realize certain individual quotas.

In 1943, as the situation regarding the war grew worse, and it came to be expected that the rice supply from colonized regions and that imported from Southeast Asia would be cut off, it became necessary to completely reformulate the food supply system. With this purpose, in June of that year, the first Emergency Guidelines for Increased Food Production were drawn up (Table 2). The content of these guidelines included the following: (1) increase the use of previously uncultivated land; (2) increase production of potatoes; and (3) create a supplemental labor force (i.e. child labor). Then, in August, the second set of such guidelines were drawn up (Table 2). They included the following additional priorities: (4) develop novel methods of increasing production of potatoes; and (5) increase the number of farm laborers. In July, 1944, by Ministerial order, revisions were made to the Farmland Planting Regulations, which were made official through the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Notification 813 (Nochi-Seido Shiryoshu Shusei-iinkai, 1972). Under this, ornamental plants and flowers, watermelons, and, for the first time, ornamental/landscape trees and strawberries were specified.

As we have described here, from the first agricultural pro-

duction restrictions, the regulations, ordinances and restrictions installed by the government were aimed at the eventual prohibition of the production of ornamental plants and flowers.

### Conclusion

Yotaro Tsukamoto states, "After the spring of the second year of the war, the situation in the country was simply no longer such that one would grow flowers. I think it was this year in which it was reported in a newspaper article that before Prime Minister Tojo was to visit the Ise Shrine, the roses growing along the route to the shrine were torn out, and the people who grew the flowers were cursed as enemies of the nation. Actually, however, considering that Japan was stretched to its limits by the war, it really wasn't a time to raise flowers" (Tsukamoto, 1978). He also gives the following, perhaps more disturbing insight: "In March of 1946, as a test question, students were asked to give their impressions of the Ornamental Plants and Flowers Horticulture lectures. An outstanding student responded that such studies were no longer necessary in Japan" (Tsukamoto, 1978). This shows that even after the war had ended, the general opinion that flowers were unnecessary to society was widespread.

During the war, there was never a law passed that explicitly prohibited flowers. However, the cultivation of flowers was prohibited through the planting regulations. During the period 1939-1945, in the name of a holy war, those people who raised flowers were labeled "non-citizens." In particular, this was true in Chiba prefecture, where the restrictions were absolute. However, even under these strict conditions, there were many cases of passive resistance by farmers and citizens in general. The fact that people hid and preserved flower seeds and bulbs [in particular on the Boso Peninsula of Chiba prefecture and in Yamazomura of Nara prefecture (Tsuchida, 1985; Nara-ken Kaki-Ueki Nogyo Kyodo-kumiai Hensan-iinkai, 1975)] is just one such example.

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### 摘要

第二次世界大戦末期の日本で行われた花栽培禁止令  
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江戸時代には、世界に誇る花卉文化を持っていた日本であるが、約60年後の第二次世界大戦末期には花卉栽培を禁止し、花卉栽培者を国賊とものしる時代を経験することになった。太平洋戦争末期に強制されたこの事実を千葉県、兵庫県、大阪府、京都府等の記録をもとに検証した。千葉県では徹底した禁止処置がとられたが、兵庫県や京都府の状況は、軍部や政府にとって都合の良い理由があれば栽培も可能であった。地域的に禁止処置の程度に差があることが分かったが、1940年から次々と食糧増産を名目とした栽培制限令が実施されていった。しかし、食糧難の最大の原因は労働力不足であったので、作付け制限（花栽培禁止）をしても食糧増産の効果は上がらなかった。このような中で、花の栽培者は、国賊呼ばわりを覚悟のうえで、花卉栽培の心をいろいろな形で残していたことは、花卉の人類に対する普遍的価値を示したといえる。