Cultivars of Japanese Plants at Brookside Gardens—II

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Koten Engei

The Japanese employ a unique system of horticulture called koten engei, a term that resists easy translation but whose meaning is approximated by “cultivation of classical plants.” In this traditional style of horticulture:

- The plants grown are groups of variants of species that, in their original form, are of modest demeanor. Most of the species are native to Japan and have insignificant or scarcely showy flowers.
- The variants are usually selections of mutated forms rather than hybrids. In most cases variations are of leaf shape and color rather than of floral characteristics.
- The kinds and degrees of variation are carefully classified and named, and certain kinds of variation are judged more valuable than others. A weak constitution is usually a “plus.”
- The plants are always grown in pots instead of in the garden. The pots are thin, porous raku ware, usually with rough surfaces, shiny black glazes, and simple, fanciful decorations. Certain styles are appropriate for certain cultivar groups.
- Cultivars are assigned names that often allude to people, places, or events in classical Chinese or Japanese history.
- The cultivars are evaluated and ranked by societies devoted exclusively to variants of single species. The rankings are published periodically on a chart called a meikan, which recalls in its format the classical ranking board [banzuke] of sumo wrestling. The societies stage public exhibitions of the plants.

Interest in the various species groups of cultivars is cyclical, being accompanied by recurrent waves of financial speculation in them.

Historically, many species have been treated as subjects for koten engei selection in Japan. Some are not grown now, but others—such as cultivars of Rohdea japonica, Asarum, and Selaginella tamariscina—have enjoyed enduring, if cyclical, interest for nearly 300 years. Some of the plants that will be described in our series are, or have been, part of the cult of koten engei and as such have, or have had, acceptable cultivar names. The first group of cultivars treated below—selections of Ardisia japonica—are part of the modern and classical koten engei tradition.

The Series

This article is part of Brookside Gardens’s ongoing effort to reduce the considerable confusion in the nomenclature of cultivated plants from Japan. Our principal sources of information in this effort are the catalogs of nurseries that deal in a wide range of cultivated plants. We have also consulted the very few classic and modern Japanese texts that list and illustrate cultivated plants. Some of the names we publish may have to be changed as we find more sources of information. This long-term, serial effort should yield a reliable catalog of valid cultivar names for a wide range of Japanese cultivated plants.

In the first installment of this series (published in Arnoldia, vol. 43, no. 4, pages 3–19, Fall 1983),
we described the special collections program in which the plants considered here are acquired, maintained, and evaluated at Brookside Gardens, Wheaton, Maryland, a publicly supported botanical and display garden of the Montgomery County, Maryland, park system. We also described in detail our approach to evaluating the acceptability of existing Japanese names as valid cultivar names, based on our interpretation of the rules and recommendations set forth in the International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants. We wish to establish and preserve in the Western literature legitimate Japanese cultivar names for the plants we are growing and to assign and register a suitable name where none exists that satisfies the Code. Readers interested in the details of our procedure for judging existing names should consult the previous article.

The inclusion of a plant name in this series does not imply that it is new either here or in Japan, or that we are its first or only introducer. We make no judgment about the garden value of the plants described; we hope that such information will emerge from an evaluation program now in progress under the supervision of Brookside Gardens's curator, Philip Normandy.

We will try to honor requests for more information about these cultivars and will be pleased to receive additional information as well. At present, time and money are not sufficient for the depth of research necessary to answer all questions that might be raised, but we will try to address questions as they arise. We intend to deposit specimens and documentation of published cultivars with the United States National Arboretum in Washington, D.C., as the plants continue to develop. Address correspondence to Carl R. Hahn, Maryland—National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20907. Please note that the Arnold Arboretum cannot supply these plants or information about them.

Mr. Young June Chang, Seoul National University, Seoul, Korea; Mr. Philip Normandy, Brookside Gardens; and Mrs Gennie Potter, Maryland—National Capital Park and Planning Commission, gave kind and invaluable assistance in preparing the manuscript, for which we sincerely thank them.

The Cultivars

The descriptions are of mature new growth in early summer. The leaves of some cultivars are different at other seasons, particularly during the colder seasons, when pink and red tones appear.

Ardisia japonica (Thunb.) Bl. ‘Amanogawa’ [Milky Way galaxy] (Yinger Collection No. 805)

Leaves of many shapes and patterns, puckered and often twisted, usually somewhat elongated or bearing large lobes of irregular sizes, 4 to 9 cm by 1 to 5.5 cm, with regularly or sparsely toothed margins. Those leaves without monstrous lobes, green with white or greenish-white central markings, those with lobes, light green with a white reticulate pattern and an irregular, darker-green border 1 to 2 mm wide, the lobes white. A vigorous clone.

Illustrated on page 97 and described on page 254 of Shumi no Koten Shokubutsu (1975).

Ardisia japonica (Thunb.) Bl. ‘Beniyuki’ [red snow] (Yinger Collection No. 810)

Leaves elongated and irregular, narrowing very acutely at the base, about half of them slightly lobed, the rest prominently and almost regularly lobed [resembling the leaves of Quercus alba], 5 to 10 cm by 2 to 4 cm. The slightly lobed ones with very narrow, white margins 1 to 2 mm in width that seldom invade the center of the leaf, the heavily lobed ones with broad, white margins up to 1.5 cm in width. Leaf surfaces slightly puckered, with slightly undulate margins. White areas becoming red in winter. A vigorous clone.

Illustrated on page 97 and described on page 254 of Shumi no Koten Shokubutsu (1975).

Ardisia japonica (Thunb.) Bl. ‘Chiyoda’ [a place-name] (Yinger Collection No. 806)

Leaves very irregular in outline, with no teeth on their margins, bladed 5 to 11 cm by 1 to 3.5 cm, all bearing thin, white margins 1 to 2 mm in width that rarely invade the centers of the blades. Most leaves almost flat, with intervenal spaces sometimes raised or puckered. A vigorous clone.
Ardisia japonica 'Amanogawa' Photographs by Robert Rinker.

Ardisia japonica 'Beniyuki'

All drawings are by Young June Chang. The scale in each case is one centimeter.
Ardisia japonica 'Chiyoda'

Ardisia japonica 'Hinode'

Illustrated on page 98 and described on page 254 of *Shumi no Koten Shokubutsu* (1975).

*Ardisia japonica* (Thunb.) Bl. ‘Chirimeni’ [crepe paper] (Yinger Collection No. 801)
Leaves long and narrow, 3 to 7 cm by 0.5 to 1.5 cm, their margins furnished with fine, regular teeth. All leaves light green with no variegation, with finely puckered surfaces, some leaves bearing as well a row of tubercles, or small, raised, crested growths, on each side of their center veins. A dwarf clone of slow growth. Described on page 254 of Shumi no Koten Shokubutsu (1975).

*Ardisia japonica* (Thunb.) Bl. 'Hinode' [sunrise] (Yinger Collection No. 800)

Leaves large, 6 to 10 cm by 2.5 to 3.5 cm, with regular marginal teeth and occasional small white lobes breaking the regular outline, yellow-green, usually with large, irregular, paler-yellow-green areas in their centers, and usually flat with puckered intervenal spaces. Vigorous and fast-growing, but with short internodes. Described and illustrated on page 169 of Koten Engi Shokubutsu (1977)

*Ardisia japonica* (Thunb.) Bl. 'Hi-no-Tsukasa' [official day] (Yinger Collection No. 812)

Leaves elongated, 4 to 10 cm by 1.5 to 3.5 cm, all distorted and very acutely narrowed at their bases, some with a few marginal teeth, medium green, many with occasional white, irregular marginal lobes. Leaf surfaces nearly flat, sometimes undulate, scarcely puckered. A moderately vigorous clone. Illustrated on page 97 and described on page 254 of Shumi no Koten Shokubutsu (1975)

*Ardisia japonica* (Thunb.) Bl. 'Hokan Nishiki' [phoenix crown brocade] (Yinger Collection No. 816)

Leaves usually ovate, usually with blunt or rounded apexes and toothed or sparsely toothed margins, 4 to 7 cm by 2 to 2.5 cm [a very few irregularly lobed], green, with broad, irregular margins 1 to 10 mm wide often invading the leaves to or near their midribs. Margins yellow–green, tinged pink. Leaf surfaces nearly flat or slightly puckered, often undulate. A moderately vigorous clone. Illustrated on page 97 and described on page 254 of Shumi no Koten Shokubutsu (1975)
**Ardisia japonica** (Thunb.) Bl. ‘Hoshiami’ [parched netting] (Yinger Collection No. 813)

Most leaves very distorted, few more or less ovate, most with toothed margins, 3 to 7 cm by 1 to 3.5 cm. About 25 percent of the leaves entirely green, the rest bearing fine, white reticulate patterns or irregular streaks of white. Most leaves cupped, puckered, or twisted. A clone of slow to moderate growth and congested habit. Illustrated on page 98 and described on page 254 of *Shumi no Koten Shokubutsu* (1975).

**Ardisia japonica** (Thunb.) Bl. ‘Ito Fukunn’ [thread border] (Yinger Collection No. 811)

Leaves ovate, mostly regular in outline, 4 to 7 cm by 2.5 to 3 cm, most with regularly toothed margins. All leaves medium green with thin white margins 1 to 2 mm wide, only occasionally slightly invading farther into the centers of the leaves. Leaf surfaces nearly smooth and only slightly puckered. Of moderate to vigorous growth. Illustrated on page 98 and described on page 254 of *Shumi no Koten Shokubutsu* (1975).

**Ardisia japonica** (Thunb.) Bl. ‘Kimigayo’ [Japan’s national anthem] (Yinger Collection No. 799)

All leaves distorted, of several shapes, most more or less ovate, about 3.5 to 6 cm by 1.5 to 3 cm. Leaf margins irregularly toothed, often with small lobes at various points along the margins. Leaves yellow-green, with darker-green central blotches; marginal lobes white. All leaves puckered and twisted, some with prominent, bubble-like swellings near their centers. Somewhat dwarf and slow-growing. Illustrated on page 98 and described on page 254 of *Shumi no Koten Shokubutsu* (1975).

**Ardisia japonica** (Thunb.) Bl. ‘Koganebana’ [gold flower] (Yinger Collection No. 817)

Leaves small, ovate to elongate, regular or irregular in outline, 2.5 to 4 cm by 1 to 2 cm, the margins with occasional teeth. Leaves medium green, usually with narrow or broad white margins 1 to 6 mm wide. A few leaves almost entirely white. Leaf surfaces nearly flat or puckered. A dwarf clone of slow, dense growth. Illustrated on page 97 and described on page 254 of *Shumi no Koten Shokubutsu* (1975).
**Ardisia japonica** [Thunb.] Bl. ‘Shirofu Chimen’ [white variegated crepe paper] [Yinger Collection No. 804]

Leaves of regular outline, elongated, with acutely pointed apexes, blades 3 to 5 by 1.5 to 2 cm; margins toothed. Some shoots and leaves all green or all white, the rest with sectoral white markings or flecks of white. A few leaves equally divided longitudinally into green and white halves. Most leaves flat and scarcely puckered, a few with undulate margins. A rather dwarf selection. Illustrated on page 96 and described on page 293 of Shumi no Koten Shokubutsu (1975).

**Carex phyllocephala** T. Koyama 'Sparkler' [a new cultivar name assigned by Barry R. Yinger] [Yinger Collection No. 1403]

Leaves, which persist for at least two years, lime green to dark green, with 1- to 4-mm-wide white margins. One to four longitudinal streaks of white often within the green portions of the leaves. Sheaths at the bases of the leafstalks purplish. A rare and attractive variant of a rare plant. Sold by Ishiguro Momitsu En (nursery), Nagoya, Japan, as furin ten'iku-suge (variegated Carex phyllocephala).

The following two plants are selections of **Daphne odora**, a Chinese shrub long popular as a garden plant in Japan. Many cultivars have been selected for pot culture as well, especially those with leaves variegated in various patterns, fasciated shoots, or twisted leaves. The classic works Somoku Kihin Kagami [1827] and Somoku Kinyoshu [1829] list twenty-one variants. The two more-modern cultivars described below are notable for their floral display as well and seem not to be included among the cultivars listed in the classics.

**Daphne odora** Thunb. ‘Ringmaster' [a new cultivar name assigned by Carl R. Hahn] [Yinger Collection No. 1894]

Leaves green with 2- to 4-mm-wide margins of cream or pale yellow. Flowers 2 cm across, with a tube 1 cm long, pure white, appearing relatively late. A very beautiful selection combining white flowers with clear marginal variegation to produce plants that are unusually striking in flower.

**Daphne odora** Thunb. ‘Zuiko Nishiki’ [fragrant brocade] [Yinger Collection No. 279, No. 1794, and No. 1920]

Leaves green, not variegated. Flowers dark pink (Rhodamine purple or Fuchsia purple in the 1938 Royal Horticultural Society's Colour Chart) or white. On young plants, flowers usually all of one color or the other, both colors appearing on the same plant as the plant matures. All the flowers of an umbel usually of one color, but some umbels having both pink and white flowers, and a few individual flowers showing sectoral [chimeral] patterns. Individual flowers large, 2 to 2.5 cm across, each with a tube 1 cm long. Corolla lobes obtuse or rounded at their tips. Flowers borne in large, rounded umbels of 15 to 25 flowers. A very beautiful plant marketed under several names, including “sakiwake” and “shibon,” both of which are applied to two-colored flowers or inflorescences. Described and illustrated on page 33 of the Fall 1980 catalog of Kairyo En (nursery) Grown by Kairyo En, Aoyama, Japan, and several other major nurseries.

**Distylium racemosum** Sieb. & Zucc. ‘Akebono’ [dawn] [Yinger Collection No. 269]

Leaf blades 5 to 10 by 2 to 5 cm, mostly about 7 cm by 3 to 3.5 cm, persisting two years. One-year-old leaves creamy white, all on new shoots, some below the apexes of the shoots speckled or veined green. Two-year-old leaves dark green with no markings. Stems of new shoots creamy white or sometimes dark pink, those of older shoots green. A vigorous plant with obliquely ascending branches. A very distinctive variegated clone, one of several listed in modern and classical Japanese sources. Described under the name ‘Akebono’ [dawn] on page 11 of Catalog No. 62 (Fall 1978–Spring 1979) of the Asahi Shokubutsuen (nursery), Okazaki, Aichi Prefecture, Japan.

**Distylium racemosum** Sieb. & Zucc. ‘Guppy’ [a new cultivar name assigned by Barry R. Yinger] [Yinger Collection No. 274]

Leaves green, not variegated, 3 to 5 cm by 1 to 2 cm, with short [5 to 15 mm] internodes. Typically Grown in Japan by Mr. Yoshimichi Hirose, Iwakuni City, Yamaguchi, Japan. Described, but not named, on page 51 of the 1911 catalog of the Yokohama Nursery Company, Yokohama, Japan.
Distylium racemosum ‘Akebono’

makes 4 to 8 cm of new growth per year. A dwarf cultivar making a dense, rounded shrub of congested growth.

Similar to a clone described and illustrated on page 42 of the explanation volume accompanying the facsimile reprint of the classic Somoku Kihin Kagami (1976). The clone listed, which the text explains is probably not in existence now, is called “koba hizon” [small-leaf Distylium]. No measurements are given, but the plant pictured has leaves that seem to be proportionally wider than those of the clone we describe here.

Grown and sold by Garden Wako [nursery], Takarazuka, Osaka-fu, Japan.

Houttuynia cordata Thunb. ‘Chameleon’ [a new cultivar name assigned by Barry R. Yinger] [Yinger Collection No. 714 and No. 824]

Leaves dark green with variable broad margins that often invade the centers of the leaves in broad sectoral patterns. Margins creamy white or yellow, often tinged with pink, in sunny locations brightened and strong-pink shades often dominate. Green interiors of the leaves usually streaked or splashed with gray—green, and a green reticulate pattern may appear on the lighter margins. Outlines of leaves less regular than those of the species, the margins often undulate. Number of white, showy bracts subtending the inflorescence (normally four)

variable in this clone. A very showy variegated selection.

A similar cultivar is listed in the classic Somoku Kihin Kagami, illustrated and described on page 73 of the explanation volume accompanying the facsimile reprint (1977). However, that clone appears to have irregularly splashed leaves with no sign of the distinct marginal variegation of ‘Chameleon’.

Sold by several nurseries in Japan as “fum dokudami” [variegated Houttuynia] (for example, Garden Wako [nursery], Takarazuka, Osaka-fu, Japan).

Ilex integra Thunb. ‘Green Shadow’ [a new cultivar name assigned by Barry R. Yinger] [Yinger Collection No. 718]

Leaf blades 5 to 9 cm by 1.5 to 3 cm. Leaves medium gray—green with irregular creamy-white margins 1 to 5 mm in width that sometimes invade nearly to the midveins. Irregular patches of paler gray—green, in broken patterns, also occupying one-third to one-half of the green portions of the leaf blades. The creamy-white areas often fused with pink on new growth. A vigorous and stable clone.

The classic, Somoku Kihin Kagami (1829), lists six cultivars of Ilex integra with variegated or contorted leaves. This selection seems to be different from those listed there.

Grown by Kiraku En [nursery], Mito, Ibaraki, Japan, as “fum mochi-no-ki,” [variegated Ilex integra].

Ophiopogon japonicus [L. f.] Ker-Gawl. ‘Torafu’ [tiger variegation] [Yinger Collection No. 1681]

Leaves to 15 cm long, 3 mm wide, green, with one to four latitudinal bands of pale yellow fading to creamy white. Most bands 1 to 5 cm wide. Some leaves entirely green or, less often, entirely creamy white.

Grown by Kairyo En [nursery], Angyo, Japan.

Pinus parviflora Sieb. & Zucc. ‘Fubuki Nishiki’ [snowstorm brocade] [Yinger Collection No. 1908]

Needles 2 to 4 cm, mostly about 3 cm, long, not curved; green, those recently produced with a glaucous bloom. Most needles banded with creamy white. Of these, the most common pattern a single band, 5 to 10 mm wide, on the upper half of needles. Band sometimes flecked with green so that there
seems to be a succession of smaller bands. Tips of needles often creamy white. Habit dense and somewhat congested, with about 4 to 9 cm of new growth each year.

Most similar to P. parviflora 'Janome' (actually, two distinct clones) and 'Ogon' 'Janome' is distinguished by its strongly curved needles and green-tipped needles in both so-named selections. 'Ogon' is distinguished by its short, densely tufted needles, which are uniformly yellow except at the base.

Illustrated on the cover of the Fall 1977 catalog of Kairyo En (nursery), Angyo, Japan, and described on the inside cover. Sold by Kairyo En and other nurseries.

Cultivar Update

In the Fall 1983 issue of *Arnoldia*, we assigned the name ‘Sundance’ to a cultivar of *Aucuba japonica* [Yinger Collection No. 267]. We have since discovered a validly published name for this clone that is acceptable under the Code. Thus, we wish to nullify our name ‘Sundance’ in favor of the name ‘Meigetsu’ [the Japanese spring and autumn equinox], which is illustrated and described on page 9 of Catalog 62 (Fall 1978–Spring 1979) of Asahi Shokubutsuensu (nursery), Okazaki, Aichi Prefecture, Japan.

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