

# エコシステム

Ecosystem  
Conservation  
Society-Japan

5 No. 133

May  
2014

## 野草を忘れた日本

### 始めよう植草祭

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私たちの文化や伝統を育ててきた日本の野草。かつて身近だった野草の生育地は、芝生やコンクリートなどに置き換わり、残った日本の野草も外来種に圧倒されつつあります。減ってしまった日本の野草を積極的に増やし、植えていく取り組みが求められます。

In Japan, wild grasses have nurtured our culture and tradition. But habitats for wild grasses that used to be everywhere have been replaced by lawns and concrete pavement. Even remaining wild grasses are being overwhelmed by invasive, non-native species. We need to implement programs to actively plant Japanese wild grasses.

# Japan Has Forgotten Its Wild Grasses

## Let's Begin 'Grass Planting Festivals'

We receive a variety of benefits from wild grasses. In other words, our lives depend on ecosystem services. Japanese culture and tradition also have received many benefits from wild grasses. For example, when the first Japanese flag was made in 1855, the dye color of the red sun was from the root of a Japanese wild grass called 'akane'. Many of the various colors on the kimonos worn by aristocrats during Heian Era of about 1,000 years ago (and often depicted in the 'Tales of Genji' and other ancient literature) were dyed with wild grasses. Also, we Japanese have a tradition to eat wild grasses in early spring and use them as medicinal herbs.

Unfortunately, these various grasses are often called 'weeds' as a whole, and treated as 'the enemy to be exterminated' by many farmers and gardeners. As a result, these wild grasses, especially prairie grasses, have been rapidly disappearing in recent years. Because there are few wild grass habitats left, we cannot just wait and expect that they will naturally reestablish and spread themselves. As far as trees are concerned, there are many events to plant trees throughout Japan. We need to promote similar events to plant wild grasses to recover them because they also support biodiversity and ecosystems just as trees do.

Caterpillars of 86 species of Japanese butterflies eat wild grasses to grow. This is 36% of all butterfly species. A research in one forest shows that about 80% of the 45 species of flowering plants from which butterflies suck their nectars are wild grasses. Approximately 70 % of vegetative species in Japan is wild grasses. Therefore, insects that depend on leaves or nectar of grasses can survive only if there are abundant and various kinds of wild grasses flourishing. Instead, we have now too many lawns and non-native grasses

everywhere.

In California where various indigenous plants still thrive, some conservation organizations have been growing native plants, including wild grasses, from seeds. They sell their seedlings at reasonable prices to help local people increase gardening activities with native plants. The National Audubon Society has been promoting its program called 'Audubon at Home' through which people can create habitats in their gardens and school yards by growing native plants which attract birds and other wildlife.

In Japan, we see new trials of vegetation on levees and on roadside slopes using 'chigaya' plants, Japanese bloodgrass, (instead of lawn-grasses) that can coexist with many wild grasses. We believe these trials should be expanded. In urban parks, grass mowing activities should be reduced so that habitat conditions for wild grasses can improve and children can use parks to experience nature. Also, corporate lawn spaces can be converted to habitats for native wild grasses.

We need to create a new system in each local area to supply seedlings so that people can more easily obtain them. Since so many children, parents and even teachers do not know wild grasses these days, we should increase opportunities for them to experience native wild grasses close to their daily lives. To achieve this purpose, we should introduce wild grasses in school text books and other materials and build biotopes in school yards and gardens.

Many opportunities exist to increase wild grasses in Japanese landscape. One of the best methods would be to promote 'Wild Grass Planting Festivals' throughout Japan.



Wild grasses have nurtured Japanese culture and tradition through their use as a dye source, in the themes of Japanese poems (waka), and as ingredients for early spring cuisine and medical herbs.



A popular lawn maintenance method that removes all 'weeds' has robbed wild grasses of their survival habitats.



The Native Here Nursery, supported by California Native Plant Society, offers native plant seedlings raised from seeds at reasonable prices to local people. We should promote similar movements.



It is easily possible to restore grasslands using native wild grasses in nearby public lands and green areas within the corporate sites.

禁無断転載 海外との情報交流促進のため、要約を英文で掲載しています