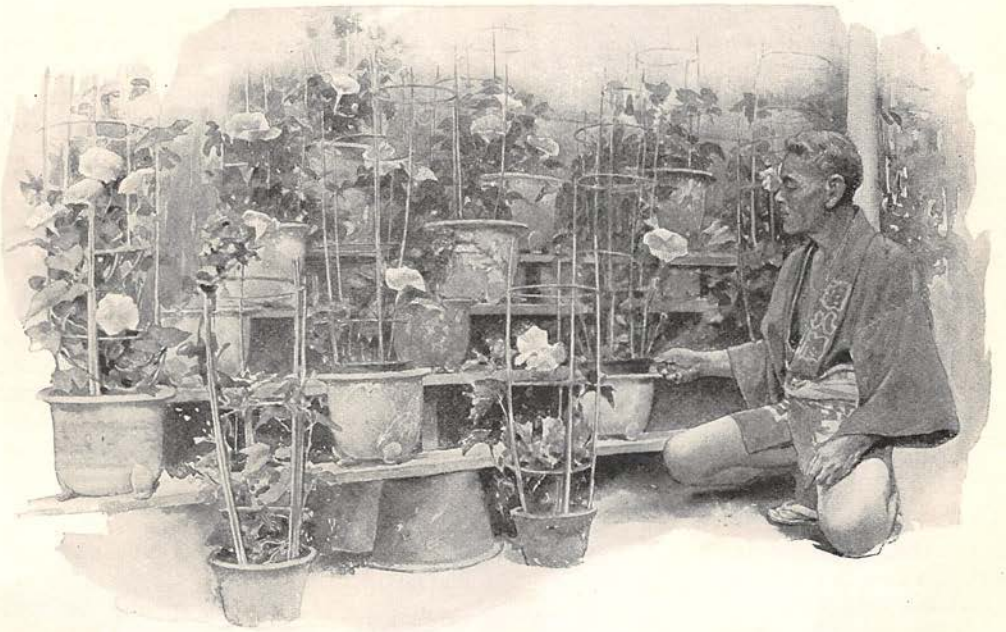


THE WONDERFUL MORNING-GLORIES OF JAPAN.

BY ELIZA RUHAMAH SCIDMORE.



DRAWN BY C. D. WELDON.

AN IRIYA GARDENER.

AS a floral sensation the chrysanthemum may be said to have had its day; the carnation is going, going; and seekers after novelty among flower-fanciers are sighing for a new flower to conquer. It is hardly known, even to foreign residents in Japan, that that land, which has given us so much of art and beauty, has lately revived the culture of its most remarkable flower, the *asagao*, our morning-glory. For size, beauty, range of color, and illimitable variety there attained, this sunrise flower precedes all others, until its cultivation has become a craze which is likely to spread to other countries, and—who knows?—perhaps there introduce the current Japanese custom of five-o'clock-in-the-morning teas and garden-parties.

Asagao, the morning flower, is more especially Japan's own blossom than the chrysanthemum, which, like it, came from China as a primitive sort of weed, afterward to be evolved by Japanese art or magic into a floral wonder of a hundred varying forms.

We who know and grow the morning-glory

as a humble back-yard vine on a string—a vine with leaves like those of the sweet potato, and puny little pink or purple flowers—are as far in the floral darkness as the Chinese, who know it chiefly as a wild thing of fields and hedge-rows, the vine of «the little trumpets,» or the «dawn-flower,» that is entangled with briars and bushes for miles along the top of Peking's walls. The old poetry and the old art do not seem to be permeated with it, as in Japan, where the forms of vases, bowls, and cups, the designs and paintings of the greatest masters, repeat the graceful lines of vine and flower, and scores of famous poems celebrate the *asagao* in written characters as beautiful to the eye as is their sound to the ear.

The *asagao* was brought to Japan with the Buddhist religion, that particular cult of early rising. Scholars and priests who went over to study the new religion brought back the seeds of many Chinese plants. The tea-plant came then, and Eisai brought the seeds of the sacred bo-tree; and Tai Kwan,



THE WELL-BUCKET, WITH KAGA NO CHIO'S POEM.

The Morning-Glory
 Her leaves and bells has bound
 My bucket-handle round.
 I could not break the bands
 Of those soft hands.
 The bucket and the well to her I left:
 «Lend me some water, for I come bereft.»

As the *cha no yu*, or ceremonial tea, became more the vogue, and was elaborated into an exquisitely fine and tedious art, the cultivation of the Chinese flower was extended from exclusive temple precincts to the gardens of laymen *chajins*, and precise formulæ were laid down for the asagao's part in these august ceremonies. Poems to its auroral charms were the regular product of midsummer *cha no yu*. Rikiu, the high priest and lawgiver to the tea-drinking hierarchy, tea-tutor to the Taiko, and arbiter of the severe etiquette and rigid simplicity of the cult, was an early amateur and enthusiast of asagao cultivation; and Hideyoshi went several times to his teacher's house to see his flowers, and his arrangement of one

the Chinese priest at the Obaku temple in Uji, who may have introduced the flower to Japan, was one of the first to sing of the asagao in graceful *outas*, classic poems which scholarly brushes repeat to-day. «Asagaos bloom and fade so quickly, only to prepare for the morrow's glory,» is Tai Kwan's best-known verse.

But the poem to the asagao is the musical *hokku*, or half-poem, the shortest form of Japanese verse, written by O'Chio san, the Kaga poetess.

Asagao ni tsurubetorarete,
moraiye midzu
 (By Asagao bucket taken,
 begging water),

the little *hokku* sings, and Sir Edwin Arnold has made this metrical translation or expansion of Kaga no Chio's verse:



DRAWN BY C. D. WELDON.

THE ENTRANCE OF AN IRIYA GARDEN.

asagao-leaf and one flower, a composition which became the favorite decoration of tea-rooms. That elaborate art of floral arrangement deals little with the asagao, and the Enshiu school cannot ordain thirty-eight ways of arranging this flower. As it wilts so quickly, the asagao is never used on felicitous occasions in Japan.

For centuries the asagao remained the same trifling little Chinese flower, the chajins and the nobles of the Kioto court conserving the cult as their special appanage or prerogative. When daimios and their idling *hatamoto* (banner-men) began to grow it, they soon worked wonders in rival *yashiki* gardens at Yeddo. The asagao was expanded to two and three times its original size, took on rare tints, and began to border and band and stripe and powder itself with contrasting colors. Each amateur was anxious to produce new varieties, and no flower less than three inches in diameter was considered worthy of praise by the seventeenth-century flower-fanciers. At the close of the last century cold weather dwarfed the flowers and ruined all the Yeddo seeds, and asagao culture was out of vogue there until the Tempo period (1830), when the craze revived, being at its height about the time of Commodore Perry's visit. Princes, priests, and nobles, *hatamoto* and gardeners, were all in the mad rivalry, and art and nature went their furthest in producing the eccentric double flowers that were immortalized in dainty little books of colored prints which are among the gems of Japanese xylography, too clumsily reproduced to-day. Plants and seeds were sold for great prices, the value of fourteen and eighteen dollars being given for even one seed. Naritaya, the Yeddo gardener, found a rival in Tonomura of Osaka, who sent his asagaos to a Yeddo flower-show by land, relays of coolies hurrying the plants along, that they might compete with the

marvels grown by the dilettanti of the shogun's court.

With the Restoration and the social overturning that changed the daimios' whole existence, scattered and impoverished their military retainers, the cult of the asagao died away again at the military capital.



DRAWN BY C. D. WELDON.

AN AMATEUR'S COLLECTION.

Naritaya no longer had vogue, and the traditions of the aristocratic art were maintained only by a few priests, retired and abdicated parents, and those conservatives whom the advancing era drove into more complete retirement. The late empress dowager, a conservator of many old customs and aristocratic traditions, and a gentle soul with a deep love of flowers, poetry, and art, kept up the culture of the asagao, and had always a fine display of flowers at her city and summer palaces during the lotus-time of the year.



DRAWN BY C. D. WELDON.

THE CONNOISSEUR.

Naritaya tried vainly to revive the fashion, and died in poverty just before the popular fancy began to turn again, in the summer of the war, and the asagao became the mid-summer craze of both masses and classes. In 1896 asagao clubs were formed in Tokio, Yokohama, Osaka, and Kioto, and the old daimios, their former hatamoto and their sons, and all the parvenus of war-made fortunes who wish one to think that they inherited the asagao seeds and traditions from at least hatamoto ancestors, devoted themselves to the cult.

The morning-glory gardens of Tokio are at Iriya (within the valley), beyond Uyeno Park, grouped together along quiet bamboo-fenced lanes that bloom with banners and pennants through the gala asagao season of the year. One must really love the asagao for itself to go to Tokio at the end of scorching July or early August, and, spending the night there, rise with the dawn for the long, long ride across the city to the morning-glory gardens. The first time I did not leave the Imperial Hotel until half-past five o'clock; and with only one brief stop to rest the tandem of trotters, it took an hour for Sanjiro's "strong friends" to get the jinrikisha to the Iriya quarter; and then we continually dodged returning jinrikishas with early flower-fan-

ciers steadying pots of marvelous asagaos between their clogs, as they rode homeward from the early fair. The crowds had gone when we reached the gardens; the great flowers were beginning to relax, and the choice pots were all fluttering with poem-like strips of paper bearing purchasers' addresses. Another time Utaki was officially in charge, and there was no evading the four-o'clock breakfast, and a fast flight across waking Tokio behind a Hokkaido pony that must have been wanting exercise for weeks, and could barely be reined in for one look at the great pond at Uyeno, with its five acres of pink and white lotus just opening to the day.

Then Iriya was the unique spectacle of Tokio's floral year—such a gathering of gay, gentle, happy flower-worshippers as one would never expect to find anywhere now in Japan, if he believed half of the talk of treaty ports about the insolence, rudeness, and changed spirit of the people. It was real Japan, and all Japan; not another foreign face there; and my guide, the policemen, and a very few gilded youths were the only ones in European dress to mar the perfect Japanese pictures in those sunrise gardens.

And there were the asagaos! Growing in pots, twining around and around four or five thin bamboos, the *owa mono* (great ringed things) of flowers, opening chalicees three, four, five, and six inches in diameter, of every conceivable color. The great circles of flowers ranged from fairy iris and delicate orchid tints, through brilliant scarlet, carnation, and intense petunia shades, through purples, cornflower and cobalt blues, to the truly "midnight color." Such gray-purples and red-purples; such soft, dull shades of rose, terra-cotta, brown, and gray; such hints and tints of mauve, fawn, and lavender, of violet, heliotrope, lilac, and lemon; the soft grays of mist and fog and clouds, the



THREE-STORY SUZUMES.



THE RIBBON-STEM.

gray of black pearls, and grays half iridescent, that shaded to the colorings of pigeons' wings and Australian opals! There was everything among these glorified asagaos, in this apotheosis of the convolvulus, that one could dream of—everything save the poor, common little pink and purple and diluted indigo morn-

were naturally combinations of the bright-red and white of the Japanese flag. There were grayish tones of *uguisi*, or «nightingale's throat,» and pale biscuit shades that were exactly «mountain mushroom.» There were flowers of palest green «ice-color,» and of faint bluish «water-color»; and darker than the «midnight color» even was the «wet crow,» for what could be blacker? Many of the great corollas were fluted and crumpled and separated into great fluffy petals, like a double poppy. The very largest flowers measured six and a half inches in diameter, and most often these «grandiflora» were white, pink, or dark purple, or white with vivid crimson borders, and the leaves of their vines were usually long and halberd-shaped.

ing-glory of an American garden, that very poorest relative of these noble Iriya flowers!

And such variegations! The great corollas were star-rayed, striped, bordered, shaded, «brushed,» spotted, speckled, splashed, mottled, and variegated in every way, colors merging, dappling, and streaming down great corollas like the jewel-tints of transmutation ware. Often the shadow of a darker color partly eclipsed a lighter one with the sharpness of the earth's shadow on the moon. If the colors were rare and lovely, the fit and pretty names that the Japanese sponsors gave these flowers added to the pleasing effect. There were great white circles of flowers

the rare pallor of which entitled them to such names as «frozen moonlight,» «Fuji's snows,» «foam of the sea,» «dragon's spume,» «white cascade,» «hoar-frost,» and «full moon.» «Melting snow» had an under-tint of—was it blue or was it green? while one flower with a faint blue-purplish band just within the edge of the great white corolla was «the moon's umbrella,» the daintiest repetition of that pale halo around the moon which all people believe is a sign of rain. Yellow flowers are rare and usually small, and from the pale little «moonlight waves» and «dye of the dew» they deepened to «gold brocade,» «Buddha's kimono,» «flag of Port Arthur,» and «Chinese general's coat.» The whole family of dull grayish pink, or old rose, known as *shibu* (persimmon-juice) or *kake* (persimmon) color, are lately classed as Danjiro colors, from the shibu-colored robe worn by that great actor in a favorite rôle. «Brocade banner» and «triumphant flag»

Naritaya's gardens have passed to other hands; his under-gardeners are proprietors themselves; and it is Yokoyama who, as dean

of his corps, can now speak of asagao fashions before the Restoration. Marushin, who produced the fine «pigeon-wing» color four seasons ago, has always a wondrous lot of owas; but old Suzuki of the *Kaika En* (Flower-blossom Garden), who so lately introduced «Buddha's kimono» to asagao circles, is to me the master of asagaos, a typical gardener of old Japan—a serene, benevolent, courteous soul, whose manner is so gentle and winning that one can easily believe that



NARITAYA'S CORKSCREW OR CORAL-BRANCH FLOWER.

flowers, birds, and little children have nearer converse with him than with the brusque, more material folk of every day. It was a delight to linger on the edge of his veranda, when the crowds had gone, and to sip thimble-cups of his fragrant yellow tea, while Suzuki showed his water-color sketches of the beauties of past seasons, and the pressed specimens of wondrous large flowers. I bought his seeds by the handful, had him teach me how to clip and press the big owa, and did anything to prolong the *causerie*, to draw that kindly, cheerful old soul to talk on and on of his cherished pets, tell the



PEACOCK-TAIL WITH WIND-BELLS.



DRAWN BY T. TOYAMA.

LONG-ARMED BELL-RINGER.

ways to meet their wants, and how to plant, to coax and pet and urge them on to fullest expansion, to newer and lovelier colors.

When I told of the ridiculous figure our morning-glories cut beside his asagaos, Suzuki said: «Yes; I know the Korean and the American asagao are little wild things, like weeds, not beautiful or worth growing. The Yokohama gardeners have bought many of my seeds to send to America lately, and you may soon have our asagao there.» He entered at once into the humor of the thing when I gave him some morning-glory seeds I had gathered on the walls of Peking, and urged him to grow them for his next season's

show, that he might amuse his visitors by a display of the savage and the civilized side by side—the Peking flowers to compare with the Tokio flowers, like the army corps of the two capitals, the contrast continuing to the same extreme between these peoples at every point.

When one has spent a few early mornings in Iriya's gardens, he who admits that he never knew the morning-glory before may think that he knows a floral thing or two. But he does not—not at all. He discovers that there is an art apart—an art within an art; that there are asagaos and asagaos; that the real cult is another thing, a finer and more intricate art than in the Taiko's day or Tempo time; that Iriya's asagaos are the mere popular, common garden variety, the flowers of the people. And one learns that there are asagaos for the masses and asagaos for the classes, differing quite as much as the court and the common language. The saying runs: «There are no celebrated flowers among owa, and no owa among celebrated flowers.» The owa—in certain ultra-floral circles one must utter that word, and «Iriya» too, with a rising inflection of scorn, or at least apologetically—are flowers for the Phillistines, to whom mere bigness is something admirable. «Any one can grow the owa; the *fukurin*'s the thing,»



PAPER CRANE—GOLD LEAVES.

one is told in dilettante gardens. « We florists grow the owa,» said Yokoyama of Iriya, « and the amateurs grow the fukurin, and *try* to make them the fashion»—this with an accent quite as much his own.

The fukurin (double circles), or *kawarimono* (changed things), the superior flowers to the culture of which aristocratic amateurs address themselves, are the greatest miracles—miracles of a hundred forms—which Japanese floriculturists have achieved. Until the open flower-shows of the Jokyukwai (Morning-glory Association) of Tokio and kindred clubs were instituted, one could know the fukurin only from rare books of prints, or by the chance acquaintance of some amateur. In such private gardens one would see the asagao no longer a long, winding, twining, graceful vine, but growing as a single drooping vine not one foot long, in the «*Kioto style*,» or as a stiff, stunted bush, in the short or «*Osaka style*.» And such fantastic flowers grow on those stems that one wonders how they can be morning-glories at all. They look like double poppies and pelargoniums, like carnations, honeysuckles, thistles, tuberoses, gardenias, chrysanthemums, columbines, lupines, dwarf peonies, double iris, butterfly- and pitcher-plants; like orchids; like anything and everything but a morning-glory. In size and range of colors they repeat the

owa's triumphs, but their eccentric petaling removes them far from those simple round corollas. Their creation and care demand all of an amateur's attention, although the fukurin retains its beauty until late in the day if brought in from the sun, and will often last through a second day. The amateur of asagao does little else than attend to them



PEONY ON A STAND.

during their season, and in that exhausting climate the series of daybreak watches and garden-parties in the extreme hot weather leave him little strength for anything else.

In their years of necromancy and meditation the amateurs have evolved a system of classification for fukurins as difficult to master as the interlacing puzzle of the sects of Buddhism. Yoshida Sobei of Osaka, the great master of asagao culture, divides the fukurins into four general varieties, each



CHRYSANTHEMUM WITH "THREAD LEAVES."

with as many subdivisions; but the Occidental brain flees from the multiples, and the general orders of the lion, peony, sparrow, and peacock are enough for an alien amateur to attempt to master in a single season of experimental growing. The lion-flowers (*shishi zaki*) have long, thin, curling petals that suggest the lion's mane. The petals of the peony-flower (*botan zaki*) are broad and thick, and curl together in a ball like a compact double carnation. The sparrow varieties (*suzume zaki*), often called kurumas or jinrikisha in Tokio, have the base of the five petals recurved to form a little cup, like the hub of a wheel or a well-curb, around the stamens that are most often changed to petals. One such cup with its collar of petals may grow upon another cup, until there are built up those «two-story» and «three-story» flowers that are so intricate that one wonders if they are not the conceit of some artificial flower-maker gone mad. The peacock-flowers (*kugaku zaki*) have stiff central petals spreading widely like a fan or a peacock's tail from a first circle of petals.

The «cup-stand» (*cha dai*) declares itself plainly as a sparrow; but one has to appeal



VINES TRAINED ON LANTERN-FRAMES.



DRAWN BY T. TOYAMA.

STAR-RAYS.

to a connoisseur to know that Naritaya's famous «corkscrew,» or «coral branch,» is a sparrow, too. The corkscrew was my will-o'-the-wisp. Marushin of Iriya assured me it was produced by some Kioto amateur; Kashu of Kioto said Marushin was its author; and Yoshida of Osaka said: «Every one knows that Naritaya first made that flower, thirty years ago.» That same arbiter settled it, too, that the fantastic «tea-whisk,» with its fine filaments of «thread petals» exactly copying the bamboo whisk with which chajins beat their green gruel to a froth, is a lion, the creation of Tonomura of Osaka, thirty-five years ago, in his Garden of Autumn Fragrance. Peony- and sparrow-flowers have been produced with their fantastic forms further embellished with circles of round petals pendent from fine filaments, the «wind-bells» swinging from pagoda eaves. This seeming culmination of the amateur's art was first produced by Okubo, Kaga no Kame, daimio of Odawara in Sagami, the most famous grower among the men of 1830. After his success the fairy wind-bells were not seen again by asagao-fanciers for forty years, when Tonomura of Osaka found his loveliest flowers hung round with the pendent petals. Some of these flowers, so much the creation of man, become his dependent creatures, and there are flowers that cannot open without his aid, remaining tight cones or buds until they drop away, unless he fans or blows or shakes them open, or untwists their tightly wrapped petals with his fingers.

The owas of three, five, and seven different colors, grown on one short vine of as many branches, are wonder-flowers classed with fukurins; but one must go to Kioto and Osaka gardens to see these rare triumphs of the florist's skill. The «seven changes» or «seven gods of luck,» are most often seen in that many tones of varying pink and purple; the «king of changes» has five flowers of intense red and blue and variegated corollas; and the «nightingale's song» has a white, a lilac, and a dark purple flower, all in even stages of unfolding at the same moment.

Not content with such erratic and eccentric flowers, the amateur obtains eccentric leaves as well. Even owas have lance- and arrow-, halberd-, spear-, maple-, and arum-shaped leaves, mottled with white, yellow, or bluish patches; and for fukurins, the leaves are narrowed down to willow-leaves, to «willow-threads,» and even to «pine-needles.» The leaves are curled and crumpled and twisted until they are very like «dragons,» «sea-weed,» and «coral branches.» The larger leaves, besides being flaked and mottled in color, change their texture. They take on down and spines;



TEA-WHISK.

they become finely wrinkled «crape-leaves,» or rougher «sand-leaves»; they assume a surface like shark-skin, grow bubbly excrescences like the warts on a toad, and curl and pucker as if a draw-string ran round the edge.

After the flowers and leaves come the stems, and the wizards twist and flatten them at will, toughen and straighten them, and give them every color, from downy white to dark purplish-brown. Most eccentric of all is the «ribbon-stem,» or *seki-ka* (under the stone), where it seems as though eight or ten ordinary vine-stems had been made to grow together side by side until there is a broad, flat stem two or three inches wide, a veritable ribbed ribbon, that disposes itself in easy, graceful curves against its trellis, and bears little tufts of pointed leaves and usually pink «peony»-flowers, growing directly from the body of the one great stem, like cactus-blossoms. Often the *seki-ka* has twin flowers, springing in pairs of the same or different colors, and brocading the length of the broad green ribbon.

The ribbon-stem was first produced by that Okubo, daimio of Odawara, who made the «wind-bells»; and to my persistent «How?» Yoshida Sobei would only shake his head and repeat what he had said about the «tea-whisk» and the «corkscrew»: «The asagao has a very changeable nature—one must study it.» Another time I brought him to admit that if I planted five or six seeds from different-colored vines very close together, gave them plenty of water and a little ancient fish from the start, bound the young stems side by side in thin Japanese paper kept moist, maybe—perhaps—I might possibly get a ribbon-stem. «Is that the way Okubo got his first ribbon-stem?» I incautiously asked.

«Ah! the asagao is a very changeable and curious flower—a very difficult flower to know»; and his eye wore a far-away look.

After eccentric flowers, leaves, and stems, the wizards began their grafting; and the asagao grows from potato-vines, grape-vines, chrysanthemum-stalks, and, last, from a rose-bush, taking on the characteristics of each plant it forms union with. There are so many amazing things to be seen in an amateur's garden that after a while one loses all sensa-

tion of surprise. With a few mornings among such marvelous asagaos as are «prestoed» from fairy-land by that bluff old samurai Yoshida,—once chief of the Yokohama *gendarmierie*, and now of Nagoya,—by Mr. Ninomiya, and by Mr. Oyagi of Yokohama, and among such leaves as gracious old Mr. Takemoto conjures up with surely just a wave of his magic fan and a rustle of his silken kimono sleeves, one is too satiated with wonders and miracles to have an exclamation left for anything he may ever see in a Japanese garden. If only for the charming Japanese people with whom it brings one into acquaintance, the cultivation of the asagao gives one reward ten times over; and the sunrise garden-parties and five-o'clock teas of the morning have a charm that dawdlers will never appreciate until they have grown the asagao, until they have the true fever—have attended thirty such parties in thirty days.

Growing the asagao is such a lottery that the seeds might well be excluded from our mails. Only two or three out of sixteen carefully gathered and labeled owa seeds will surely produce the parent flower. One sows the «moon's umbrella,» and reaps the «pigeon-wing,» plants the «brocade banner,» and may find Li Hung Chang's yellow riding-jacket growing on that vine. Only fifty per cent. of fukurin seeds—sold at prices ranging from ten cents to one and two dollars each seed—ever grow at all, and only five seeds out of one hundred may be expected to produce fukurins. The raising of asagaos is a speculation that might lure a Wall-street man to such early-rising, midsummer madness. The manuals of information, both old and new, are lotteries as well, with their contradictory advice. I cross-examined forty-two people concerning this flower of the changeable nature in my year's quest of it. Every one was willing to, started to, was just about to, tell me all about it, how to grow it, «to make the fukurin,» etc., when—the thread was lost, the conversation went off into the fog, the vague, the opaque, as the Oriental led to the Occidental his favorite will-o'-the-wisp dance. The asagao is the flower of Japanese flowers, the miracle of their floriculture, and one may best ascribe it to pure necromancy, and cease to question and pursue.

