

CORRESPONDENCE – BOTANY, THE JAPANESE WAY

(The following is an abridged version of an email forwarded to me by Chris Ecroyd from Trevor Jones, a member of RBS for the last few years who is currently working in Japan - Editor).

Hello Chris,

It is good to hear from you. I am enjoying my time in Japan, the change of culture and food, the chance to meet new people, and the warm spring weather we are having. May is one of the best months of the year, before the rainy season starts in June. The Forestry and Forest Products Research Institute (FFPRI) where I am working is some distance from Tsukuba city, where my apartment is located, so I have a 35 minute cycle to work each day. I am based in the Wood Anatomy and Quality Laboratory at FFPRI and will be working on a drying project, looking at the relationships between wood properties and the conventional and high temperature drying properties of sugi (*Cryptomeria japonica*) clones.

Last weekend I went on a botanical trip with a group of about 40 people from work to a natural broadleaf forest area about three hours drive north of Tsukuba. It was quite a contrast to the Rotorua Botanical Society trips, because rather than just identify the trees and shrubs, many of the people took samples for later identification during the evening. The vegetation is very different to New Zealand, with many *Acer* species, *Fagus crenata*, *Quercus mongolica* var. *grosseserrata* and *Magnolia obovata* making up the canopy trees. The *Magnolia obovata* trees were in flower, and were a highlight of the trip, forming large trees with very large leaves and large cream-coloured flowers that have a soapy perfumed scent. They really stood out amongst the green canopy of the forest.

Regards, Trevor Jones