

MAJOR NATURE IMAGES IN BASHŌ'S HOKKU

Numbers refer to poem number in David Landis Barnhill, *Bashō's Haiku: Selected Poetry of Matsuo Bashō* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).

ajisai: hydrangea. The deciduous shrub up to five feet high with ball-shaped clusters of bluish flowers in June and July. It has become a common ornamental throughout the world. *Hydrangea macrophylla*. SUMMER. 92, 673.

aki no kaze; akikaze: autumn wind. Usually refers to the biting wind that connotes loneliness as well as cold. See also *kogarashi* and *nowaki*. AUTUMN. 1, 34, 77, 101, 135, 136, 181, 316, 321, 331, 414, 416, 421, 426, 452, 559, 578, 642.

aki no kure: autumn's evening. Refers both to an autumn evening and the evening of autumn, i.e. late autumn. A principal image of tranquil loneliness. AUTUMN. 37, 38, 67, 137, 501, 718, 719.

asagao: morning glory, literally "morning face." The normally purple blossoms last only into mid-morning, and thus suggest impermanence. *Ipomoea nil*, *I. purpurea*, or *I. indica*. AUTUMN. 62, 63, 130, 210, 324, 638, 639.

ashi: reed. Up to 20" high, it is common by swamps, inlets, and ditches. *Phragmites communis*.

- *ashi no wakaba:* young leaves of reeds. SPRING. 255.
- *ashi kari:* cutting reeds. AUTUMN. 430.

ayamegusa: blue flag iris. Blooms purple May through July. 5th day of Fifth Month was the Iris Festival (also known as "Boy's Day"), and irises were displayed on the eaves of houses. Native to mountain meadows. *Iris sanguinea*, *I. nertschinskia*, or *I. sibirica*. Some authorities state that in Bashō's time, this word referred to sweet flags, *Acorus calamus*. See *kakitsubata*. SUMMER. 384, 606.

bashō: banana, plantain. Its long, broad leaves tear easily in wind and rain, thus suggesting transience and ascetic exposure to nature's elements. Used in Buddhist texts as a symbol for impermanence. In Japan, it rarely bears fruit. *Musa basjoo*. AUTUMN. 52, 58, 103, 371, 611.

botan: peony. A deciduous shrub usually around three feet high. Early summer blossoms of pink, red-purple, or yellow summer are luxuriant and suggest splendor. *Paeonia suffruticosa*. SUMMER. 139, 168, 287, 630, 670.

chidori: plover. Bird of the seashore, with a shrill, plaintive cry that evokes the loneliness of winter. Year-round resident that flocks in winter, with long legs and rather short bill. Refers to various species in the genus *Charadrius*. WINTER. 139, 224, 519, 543.

chō; kochō: butterfly. In Bashō's time, the butterfly was associated with the story in the *Zhuangzi*, in which Zhuangzi wakes after dreaming he was a butterfly, but then wonders whether he is actually a butterfly dreaming he is Zhuangzi. SPRING. 44, 45, 73, 86, 126, 163, 167, 319, 442, 478, 486, 512.

hagi: bush clover. A deciduous shrub up to seven feet high, with reddish-purple blossoms in early autumn. Associated with dew and the mournful cry of a stag in mating season. *Lespedeza bicolor*. AUTUMN. 211, 412, 417, 418, 440, 441, 572, 636.

hana: blossoms. Unless otherwise specified, *hana* refers to cherry blossoms (*sakura*). Moon (*tsuki*) and blossoms are the two principal Japanese images of nature, and as a pair they refer to nature's beauty and poetry about it. Cherry blossoms are known for scattering while at their peak, suggesting the combination of beauty and sadness central to Japanese aesthetics. *Prunus spp.* SPRING. 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 29, 72, 78, 82, 83, 86, 87, 88, 112, 113, 156, 159, 161, 177, 179, 186, 198, 199, 233, 244, 251, 259, 264, 268, 269, 270, 275, 278, 279, 306, 323, 356, 401, 105, 410, 446, 468, 473, 474, 481, 537, 539, 601, 622, 628.

harusame; haru no ame: spring rain. A soft, steady, quiet drizzle. See also *samidare* and *shigure*. SPRING. 84, 276, 471, 535, 667, 669.

hibari: skylark. A bird of meadows and fields known in poetry for singing cheerfully as it flies high into the sky. A year-round resident, it is about seven inches long, golden brown with white edges to tail and wings. *Alauda arvensis*. SPRING. 200, 201, 267, 355, 551, 552.

hirugao: noonflower, bindweed, literally “noon-face.” A twining vine similar to the *asagao*, but opens in midday. Native to grassy fields and mountains, it is often associated with poor people. *Calystegia japonica*. SUMMER. 46, 47, 302, 634.

hotaru: firefly. Its many poetic associations include passionate love, the spirits of the dead, and a poor Chinese scholar who studied by the glow of fireflies. Ten luminous species in the family *Lampyridae* of the order *Coleoptera*. SUMMER. 55, 297, 298, 299, 491.

hototogisu: cuckoo. It is seldom seen, usually calling during flight in the evening in the mountains, so it is primarily an aural rather than visual image. Poets wait impatiently for its plaintive song, which announces the beginning of summer. The song often suggests a nostalgic sense of time past, and is associated with death. A summer visitor to Japan, it is greyish and about ten inches long. *Cuculus poliocephalus*. SUMMER. 48, 53, 69, 93, 139, 202, 292, 294, 369, 372, 373, 484, 490, 492, 547, 605, 606, 629, 671.

inazuma: lightning. Also *inabikari*, lightning flash. A symbol of impermanence. AUTUMN. 209, 508, 589, 694, 700.

kagerō and **itoyū**: heat waves. Distortion of the air caused by heat. SPRING. 249, 250, 351, 360, 361, 477.

kakitsubata: blue flag iris, rabbit-ear iris. Blossom is purple, up to twenty-eight inches high. Grows in wet soils (versus the *ayame*). *Iris levigata*. SUMMER. 6, 164, 288.

karasu: crow or raven. The crow or raven tend to be considered disagreeable and suggest desolation. *Corvus spp.* ALL SEASONS. 38, 158, 467, 525.

kari: wild geese. Migratory birds of various species that arrive in Japan in late autumn. AUTUMN. 509, 596, 654, 706.

- **kari no wakare** (departing geese): SPRING, indicating the birds’ return to their summer home north of Japan. SPRING. 13.

keshi: opium poppy. The summer blossoms are of various colors, especially white (*shirageshi*). A petal that falls off a poppy is said to resemble a severed butterfly wing, and thus is associated with painful parting. *Papaver somniferum*. SUMMER. 167, 291.

kiji: pheasant. A bird of fields and farmlands known especially for its plaintive call that is suggested in the Japanese language as *horohoro*. The male is about thirty-one inches long, the female twenty-four inches, including their long tails. Year-round resident. *Phasianus colchicus*. SPRING. 280, 355, 480.

kiku: chrysanthemum. Blooms white or yellow in autumn, with beautiful fragrance. It is associated with aristocracy and purity, but also with the refined tastes of poetic reclusion as embodied in the Chinese poet Tao Qian (365-427). Drinking dew on a chrysanthemum was said to extend one’s life, and even the fragrance was considered therapeutic. The chrysanthemum appears in Bashō’s poetry more often than any other plant except cherry and plum trees. *Chrysanthemum morifolium*. AUTUMN. 49, 96, 99, 109, 219, 220, 319, 335, 339, 420, 445, 447, 511, 512, 573, 579, 645, 647, 712, 713, 721.

- **kangiku**: winter chrysanthemum. WINTER. 648, 649.

kinuta: fulling block. A wooden tool to pound cloth to make it soft and lustrous. Frequently appearing in classical literature, its sound was considered melancholy and it was associated with rural life. AUTUMN. 75, 105, 132.

kiri: mist. Traditionally mist (*kiri*) is associated with autumn, while haze (*kasumi*, *usugasumi*, hokku 152) is a spring phenomenon. It is uncertain whether *kasumi* and *kiri* are really different phenomena other than their seasonal associations. For an extensive discussion, see William J. Higginson, *Haiku World* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1996), 190-94. AUTUMN. 119, 120, 424, 704.

kirigirisu: cricket. Like the cicada (*semi*), crickets are primarily an aural image. Its strident cry is penetrating, and suggests age and loneliness. (In modern Japanese, *kirigirisu* means “grasshopper,” while the cricket is *kōrogi*.) Various species and genera in the family *Gryllidae*. AUTUMN. 419, 502, 510, 514, 563.

kogarashi: winter wind. A harsh, withering wind. See also *akikaze* and *nowaki*. WINTER. 108, 144, 516, 585, 588, 590.

kuina: water rail. A small marsh bird with brownish body, about eleven inches long. Its call, transcribed as *katakata*, is said to be like the sound of tapping, suggesting someone visiting a recluse. *Rallus aquaticus*.

SUMMER. 91, 682.

kuri: Japanese chestnut. The nuts, which have prickly husks, are used for food. The blossoms are inconspicuous. *Castanea crenata*. AUTUMN. 36, 559, 710.

• **kuri no hana** (chestnut blossoms): SUMMER. 378.

momo: peach. The pinkish-white blossoms appear in April and May and are associated with Girl's Day, 3rd of Third Month. *Prunus persica*. SPRING. 79, 157, 176, 421, 587, 604.

mugi: barley or wheat. Cultivated in dry fields and as a second crop in addition to rice. Eating ears of barley was an epithet for a poor man's journey. Harvested in summer, when the plant turns red. Various species. SUMMER. 53, 165, 169, 369, 536, 551, 552, 674.

mukuge: rose of sharon, rose mallow, hibiscus. Tall deciduous shrub sometimes planted as a hedge. Its two inch white or rose-purple flowers bloom and fade before the day is through, and thus was considered a symbol of impermanence. *Hibiscus syriacus*. AUTUMN. 35, 122.

nadeshiko: wild pinks. These 12-20 inch high plants native to the mountains have five-petaled pink (or white) blooms June through September. In classical poetry this late summer-early autumn plant was considered one of the "seven plants of autumn." *Dianthus superbus*. SUMMER. 206, 515, 609.

nasu: eggplant. A vegetable that ripens in late summer, when it is pickled, grilled, fried, or boiled. Smaller than Western varieties. *Solanum melongena*. SUMMER. 402, 415, 471.

nowaki: autumn windstorm. It is a severe windstorm generated by typhoons in autumn. See *akikaze* and *kogarashi*. AUTUMN. 58, 96, 334, 500.

ogi: reed. A plant that spreads quickly in marshy areas. *Miscanthus sacchariflorus*. AUTUMN. 52, 560.

sakura: cherry blossoms. See *hana*. SPRING. 3, 79, 80, 162, 262, 263, 265, 271, 272, 274, 382, 405, 475, 476, 537, 604, 707.

samidare: summer rains. Long, steady rains of the Fifth Month that can continue for several weeks. The monsoon season in Japan. Also written *satsukiame*. See *harusame* and *shigure*. SUMMER. 22, 54, 203, 204, 296, 379, 387, 393, 489, 554, 677, 679.

semi no koe: cicada's cry. Known as a symbol of impermanence because of the shell that remains after its short life, as well as for its penetratingly shrill songs in summer. Several species in the family *Cicadidae*. SUMMER. 205, 207, 392, 496.

shigure (verb: *shiguru*): early winter showers. Brief, intermittent, cold showers or drizzle of early winter and sometimes late autumn. WINTER. 42, 39, 143, 145, 2221, 222, 456, 457, 458, 464, 513, 582, 592, 617, 708.

shii: pasania. A tall, broadleaf evergreen tree with inconspicuous yellow flowers in May and June, and its inconspicuous but elegant blossoms are associated with SUMMER. It also produces nuts (*shii no mi*) in AUTUMN. The nuts and evergreen leaves suggest dependability. *Castanopsis cuspidata*. 485, 631.

shika: deer. Chestnut colored small deer less than five feet long. Mating season is October through December, when mournful calls are heard. *Cervus nippon*. AUTUMN. 16, 285, 711.

shinobugusa: fern of longing, hare's foot fern. *Shinobu* means both remember and to long for something. *Polypodium lineare*, *Davallia bullata*, or *D. mariesii*. AUTUMN. 134, 142, 574.

shirauo: whitefish, icefish. A small fish around two inches (one *sun*) long that is silvery with black eyes and nearly transparent in the water. *Salangichtys microdon*. Spring. 51, 140, 358, 626.

soba no hana: buckwheat blossoms. White blossoms appear in early autumn. They are considered rather commonplace, and buckwheat is used in making noodles. *Fagopyrum esculentum*. AUTUMN. 572, 610, 709.

suisen: Chinese narcissus. Blooms white in late winter, suggesting purity, with leaves up to sixteen inches long. *Narcissus tazetta* var. *chinensis*. WINTER. 190, 586, 587.

susuki (also *obana*): miscanthus, eulalia. One of the Seven Herbs of Autumn, it resembles our pampass grass and grows up to five feet high in hills and fields. Fluffy white blossoms in August through October gave rise to the alternate name, **obana** (tail flower). *Miscanthus sinensis*. AUTUMN. 53, 417, 518, 593, 694.

suzume: sparrow, Eurasian Tree Sparrow. A common bird of villages and towns, making nests near houses. *Passer montanus*. NO SEASON, but baby sparrows (*kosuzume*) are a spring image and sparrows in rice fields (*ina suzume*) is an autumn image. 81, 161, 197, 258, 314, 570.

suzumi: cool. Also *suzushi*. The experience of refreshing coolness during summer heat, often at night (*yūsuzumi* or *yoisuzumi*). Often used in greeting poems that praise a host's house or view. SUMMER. 18, 47, 116, 207, 310, 389, 397, 405, 406, 407, 411, 415, 493, 608, 681, 683, 685, 689, 691, 692, 295.

taka: hawk. Refers to various raptors of the order *Falconiformes*. WINTER. 229, 230, 231, 571.

tamamatsuri: Festival of the Dead, Feast of All Souls, Bon Festival, *urabon*. A festival held in the middle of Seventh Month (in Bashō's day from the 13th to the 16th). It is a time when families offer services for ancestors who have returned as spirits to their old homes. AUTUMN. 317, 498, 699.

tanabata: Star Festival. On the 7th of Seventh Month, this festival celebrates the legend of the Oxherd Boy and Weaver Girl, represented as two stars, Altair and Vega. These two lovers are doomed to be separated by Heaven's River (the Milky Way) all year except on this day, when magpies form a bridge with their wings. AUTUMN. 408, 497, 697.

tōgarashi: red pepper. A hot-tasting red pepper with many varieties that suggest rustic simplicity. *Capsicum annum*. AUTUMN. 320, 472, 613.

tsubaki: camellia. Evergreen shrub blossoming February through April, familiar in the West as an ornamental. *Camellia japonica*. SPRING. 90, 232, 470.

tsuki: moon. Bashō's favorite image, and one of the two principal images in Japanese nature poetry, along with the cherry blossoms of spring. The phrase "moon and blossoms" is a metonymy for nature's beauty and for nature poetry. Unless otherwise specified, *tsuki* refers to the full moon in AUTUMN. 2, 19, 23, 30, 36, 95, 100, 112, 113, 123, 124, 193, 213, 214, 215, 289, 290, 291, 297, 326, 329, 333, 356, 398, 400, 401, 412, 431, 432, 433, 434, 436, 437, 438, 443, 447, 450, 459, 493, 506, 534, 539, 547, 564, 565, 566, 567, 569, 574, 575, 604, 611, 614, 622, 625, 630, 644, 716, 722.

- **izayoi no tsuki:** moon of the sixteenth night. Moon of the night after the full moon, usually the 16th of Eighth Month, which rises about an hour later than the moon of the 15th (and thus, literally, "hesitant moon"). AUTUMN. 330, 335, 566, 568, 641.
- **meigetsu:** harvest moon, literally, "bright moon." The full moon of the Eighth Month. AUTUMN. 147, 182, 435, 503, 504, 565, 569, 612, 704, 705.
- **mika no tsuki (mikazuki):** crescent moon, literally "third-day moon." AUTUMN. 63, 185, 312, 397, 610, 643.
- **nochi no tsuki** (later harvest moon) and **tsuki no nagori** (moon's farewell) refer to the moon of the 13th of the Ninth Month, which was also known as the "chestnut moon." AUTUMN. 336, 574.
- **oborozuki:** hazy moon. A SPRING image, because spring was the season of haze. 10, 602.
- **tsukimi:** moonviewing. A principal aesthetic pastime. AUTUMN. 171, 183, 216, 429, 430, 505, 715.

tsuru: crane. Includes seven species in the genus *Grus*, noted for beauty and a mournful, high-pitched screech. Particularly prized is *tanchō* (*Grus japonensis*: Japanese Crane). Said to live a thousand years, it is a symbol of longevity along with the tortoise (which lives ten thousand years). NO SEASON. 54, 155, 212, 371, 406, 628.

tsuta: Japanese ivy. Deciduous ivy that turns subdued colors, including red, in autumn. When associated with bamboo or a thatched hut, it suggests a simple, *wabi* life of a hermit living tranquilly in nature. *Parthenocissus tricuspidata*. AUTUMN. 127, 327, 337, 578.

tsuyu: dew. A symbol of impermanence. AUTUMN. 99, 133, 238, 319, 325, 374, 425, 448, 453, 636, 637, 670, 689, 696.

uguisu: Japanese bush warbler. Known for the beauty of its song, which is said to suggest the title of the Lotus Sutra (*Hokke-kyō*). Associated with plums blossoms in early spring. A common resident of Japan, about the size of a sparrow, colored olive-brown above and white below. *Cettia diphore*. SPRING. 68, 470, 600, 663, 676.

ume (or mume): plum (or Japanese apricot). Its fragrant white or red (*baika*) blossoms appear in early spring before leaves appear. It reaches a height of twenty feet. Associated with the bush warbler

(*uguisu*) as the eagerly anticipated harbingers of spring. *Prunus mume*. SPRING. 69, 85, 89, 151, 154, 155, 166, 194, 195, 196, 232, 237, 246, 247, 248, 252, 253, 254, 352, 532, 533, 534, 598, 603, 625, 661, 664.

unohana: deutzia. Deciduous shrub of the mountains often used as a hedge. It produces small white blossoms in early summer. It is the poetic name for Fourth Month. *Deutzia scabra* or *D. crenata*. SUMMER. 166, 672.

uri: melon. A vegetable that blossoms (yellow) in early summer and ripen in late summer. It is often associated with coolness. SUMMER. 207, 305, 415, 488, 494, 634, 689.

yamabuki: mountain rose. Deciduous shrub of the rose family that reaches to seven feet high. Single, five-petaled yellow blossoms appear on the tips of branches in April and May. Native to mountainous areas and associated with streams. *Kerria japonica*. SPRING. 273, 541, 542.

yanagi: willow, especially the weeping willow. Prized for bright green leaves in spring. *Salix babylonica*. SPRING. 68, 84, 102, 375, 394, 411, 427, 603, 662, 663, 666, 672.

yūgao: moonflower, bottle gourd, literally, “evening-face.” A gourd producing vine whose white blossoms of late summer resemble the morning glory (*asagao*, morning-face) and bindweed (*hirugao*, noon-face). The gourd is hollowed out for a container, and is traditionally associated with poor rural families. *Lagenaria sciceraria*. SUMMER. 56, 301, 633.