

「変わり葉ゼラニウム」の日本への導入および発展の歴史*

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History of introduction and development of Fancy-leaved Zonal Pelargonium in Japan*

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Summary

The history of introduction and spread of Zonal Pelargonium and fancy-leaved Zonal Pelargonium in Japan was studied, with accumulation of old documents and useful information through individuals familiar with the plants. All varieties recorded in the past were examined about their background of breeding year, breeder's name and characteristics.

Zonal Pelargonium came from Netherlands into Japan around the end of the Edo era (the mid-19th century). This group was introduced in the Owari region (present Aichi Prefecture) in 1864, according to the description in Watanabe's *Shinto-kayo-zufu*, the illustrative books of alien plants at that time. The illustrations of Pelargonium included in this book are the oldest ones in Japan, from the result of this investigation.

Initially, Zonal Pelargonium attracted little attention, but gradually gained popularity along with successive import of various varieties from Europe, in the late Meiji era, by several Japanese nurseries, i.e., Yokohama Nursery Co. Ltd.

Fancy-leaved Zonal Pelargonium gradually became popular from around 1909, and spread throughout Japan with the efforts of nurserymen in Niigata, who first recognized their distinct commercial value and purchased them in the spring of 1914.

The first boom of fancy-leaved Zonal Pelargonium arose in 1914-1916. Imported varieties were given each Japanese name. Various hobby clubs of them were established and scattered in many cities and towns. They issued the ranking lists (Banzuke in Japanese) of varieties. The major varieties imported during the early period had large and thin leaves. When people found rare and good shoot as sport, they vegetatively propagated them by cutting. The varieties such as 'Kokuunryu' and 'Shiunryu' imported into Japan in around 1915 had small and thick leaves with richer color. Japanese original breeding work using these two varieties started, and several new varieties were produced and released successively. In 1927-1929, the second boom of fancy-leaved Zonal Pelargonium occurred and growing/breeding of them was gained special attention for the object of money-making. Thereafter, the Japanese Pelargonium Association was established in 1932. The third boom of growing them occurred in around 1939 with small scale.

After World War II, the fashion of fancy-leaved Zonal Pelargonium has been declining to the present.

In summarizing historical documents in Taisho and Showa era, more than 300 varieties were found to have been imported or bred in Japan until the Showa era. At present, many varieties of them have been extinct already. However, about 50 varieties have been preserved and still cultivated by the Hiroshima Botanical Garden.

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