

Ozu Town, Artificial Plum Flower

Ozu Town in Kumamoto Prefecture is located on the east side of Kumamoto City at the foot of Mt. Aso to the west.

When Kato Kiyomasa became the lord of Higo in Tensho 16(1588), he started flood control projects in Ozu Town and it became a major breadbasket. Uwaide and Shitaide, which were built in the Edo period, are still important waterways that irrigate the fields of Ozu Town.

At that time, Ozu Town prospered as a key point of the Bungo Kaido Road connecting Higo and Bungo, and as a post town for sankin kotai.

Today the town is still close to the airport and train station, acting as a key transportation hub where businessmen and both foreign and domestic tourists come and go.

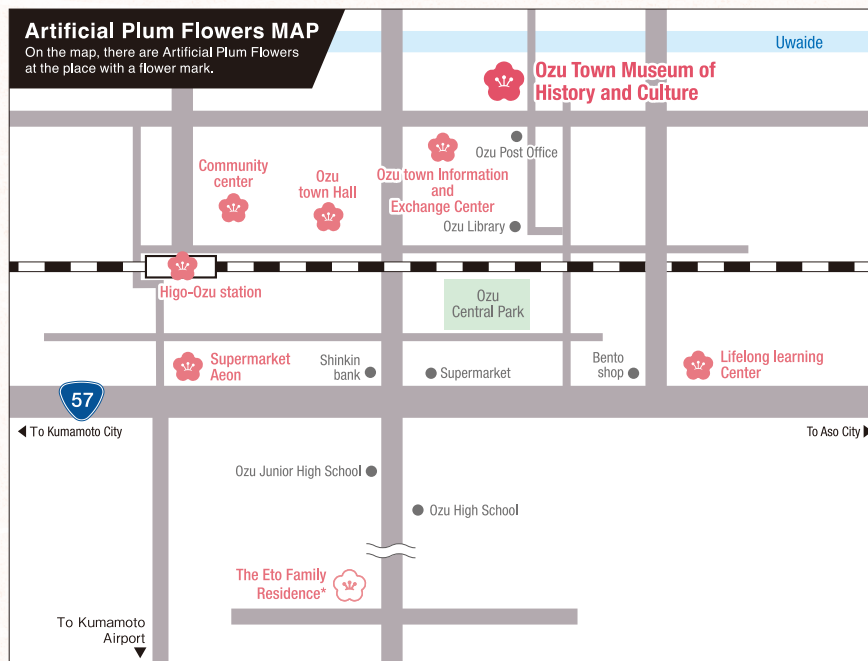
Come and enjoy the ever-changing traditions of the town.



Uwaide



Where the River meets the canal.



*The Eto Family Residence open to the public two times a year.

[Information]

Ozu Town Museum of History and Culture

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(9:00~17:00/Closed on Mondays and New Year holidays)

[Planning and publication]

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Traditional
Folk Art



梅の花造

Artificial Plum Flowers

Ozu Town Designated Intangible Folk Cultural Property

Beautiful flowers that can be mistaken for fresh flowers.

Elegant Plum Flowers

designated as an Intangible Folk Cultural Property of the town of Ozu are exquisitely made to look like living plum trees with growing buds and flowering patterns on the branches using a piece of paper called "tsusososhi."

In addition to the exquisite technique of flowers, buds, and Utena*, the most important features of artificial plum flowers are considered to be their branches, their trunk, and the combination of flowers that emerge from new branches.

**The outermost part of the flower.*



History of artificial plum flowers

The founder of artificial plum flowers is said to be Okada Hyozemon of the Okada family, an official of Ozu Town in the Edo period. Around the same time, the tradition of displaying artificial flowers with the Jizo statue enshrined in his residence at the Ozu Jizo Festival was formed, and has remained a practice since. The Okada family passed down the secrets of artificial flowers from generation to generation, and the culture spread throughout the town.



At that time, Ozu was a post town for Daimyo (Feudal Lords) who were on the path of Sankin Kotai (A national road system that feudal lords would travel on periodically to visit the Shogun). The imitation plum flowers caught the attention of the lord, who was very pleased with them as souvenirs of Edo, and it is said that they became popular as "Yamaga no toro or Ozu no Ume Hana" (Yamaga Lanterns or Ozu Artificial Plum Blossoms). Since 1972, the Higo Ozu Folk Art Flower Preservation Association has continued this tradition.



**A detailed history can be found in the "Suga no ya Nikki Sho" and "Ozu Town History" of Ozu*



1 Process of making the flowers /
2 Each piece is made meticulously /
3 Japanese and Taiwanese artisans share their skills.

Connection with Taiwan

"Tsuusoshi" is made from kamiatsude (A rice paper plant) and is also used for underwater flowers. It expresses the rounded shape of plum petals richly, yet has strong elasticity. In addition, the shape of paper does not change over the years. Tsusoshi paper, which plays an important role in artificial plum flowers, was discovered by flower craftsmen when they visited Taiwan at the end of the Meiji period. Up until that time, Japanese paper, or Habutae paper had been used, but the use of tsusoshi paper made it easy for anyone to make artificial flowers. However, for a time the availability of paper became difficult and the creation of

artificial plum flowers ceased. After years of efforts by volunteers who believed that this wonderful culture must not be lost, they were able to obtain tsusoshi paper from Taiwan and revive it. Since then, the paper has continued to be used for artificial plum flowers, and exchanges with Taiwan have continued. Today, Ozu is undergoing major changes. With the number of immigrants and tourists from Taiwan increasing, exchanges between Taiwan and Ozu will become more active in the future.

These are "tsusoshi" and a rice paper plant.

