



Gray skies, rain and snow

in Japanese Flower-and-Bird Art

Introduction

In Japanese flower-and-bird art picture composition is typically uncomplicated. The flower and bird appear in the foreground and real life background elements such as the sky are omitted. To make pictures more realistic, and dramatic, some Japanese artists working in the early to mid-1900s included a gray sky plus rain or snow in their flower-and-bird pictures. At that time Japan was undergoing a process of modernization and many European practices were adopted, even in art. Japanese artists who added gray skies, rain and snow to flower-bird art were likely influenced by European art with its often stormy skies. One such picture entitled snow storm: Hannibal and his men crossing the Alps by the Englishman J.M.W. Turner is shown below.



Twenty examples of early twentieth century Japanese flower-and-bird art with gray skies and either rain (pictures 1-9) or snow (pictures 10-20) are included in this virtual exhibition. These woodblock-printed pictures are part of the Reader Collection of Japanese Flower-and-Bird Art. For each of the twenty pictures the name of flower, bird and artist is given along with print size.

1 Hardy begonia (*Begonia grandis*) and great tit (*Parus major*) by Koson Ohara, 260 x 385 mm



2 Cotton-rose (*Hibiscus mutabilis*) and Eurasian tree sparrow (*Passer montanus*) by Gessō Yoshimoto, 250 x 385 mm



3 Lespedeza (*Lespedeza* sp.) and lesser cuckoo (*Cuculus poliocephalus*) by Koson Ohara, 265 x 395 mm



4 Fan columbine (*Aquilegia flabellata*) and barn swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) by Gyōsui, 125 x 250 mm



5 Water chestnut (*Trapa japonica*) and little egret (*Egretta garzetta*) by Koson Ohara, 185 x 365 mm



6 Maidenhair tree (*Ginkgo biloba*) and long-tailed tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*) by Koson Ohara, 190 x 360 mm



7 Japanese iris (*Iris ensata*) and northern lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) by Shōun Yamamoto, 95 x 210 mm



8 Camellia (*Camellia japonica*) and Japanese white-eye (*Zosterops japonicus*) by Kōhō Shoda, 70 x 365 mm



9 Cotton-rose (*Hibiscus mutabilis*) and common kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) by Rakusan Tsuchiya, 385 x 255 mm



10 Plum (*Prunus mume*) and mallard duck (*Anas platyrhynchos*) by Hasui Kawase, 390 x 270 mm



11 Heavenly bamboo (*Nandina domestica*) and Eurasian tree sparrow (*Passer montanus*) by Jō, 190 x 400 mm



12 Heavenly bamboo (*Nandina domestica*) and Eurasian tree sparrow (*Passer montanus*) by Kōitsu Tsuchiya, 100 x 150 mm



13 Camellia (*Camellia japonica*) and Eurasian tree sparrow (*Passer montanus*) by Bakufū Ohno, 85 x 135 mm



14 Plum (*Prunus mume*) and blue magpie (*Urocissa erythrorhyncha*) by Bakufū Ohno, 85 x 135 mm



15 Camellia (*Camellia japonica*) and Japanese bush-warbler (*Cettia diphone*) by Koson Ohara, 180 x 260 mm



16 Common reed (*Phragmites australis*) and white-fronted goose (*Anser albifrons*) by Koson Ohara, 260 x 390 mm



17 Heavenly bamboo (*Nandina domestica*), marlberry (*Ardisia japonica*) and Eurasian tree sparrow (*Passer montanus*) by Koson Ohara, 95 x 140 mm



18 Common reed (*Phragmites australis*) and mallard duck (*Anas platyrhynchos*) by Nisaburō Itō, 115 x 160 mm



19 Tree peony (*Paeonia suffruticosa*) and blue magpie (*Urocissa erythrorhyncha*) by Bakufū Ohno, 85 x 135 mm



20 Japanese laurel (*Aucuba japonica*) and Java sparrow (*Padda oryzivora*) by Koson Ohara, 75 x 105 mm

