

A Calendar of Words Seasonal Words for July

When the rainy season ends in Japan, it heralds the onset of high summer. The season in which the sun pours down from the skies and scorches our skins, fully justifying the various Japanese seasonal words meaning “extreme heat,” “scorching heat,” “blazing heat” and “burning heat,” will soon be upon us.

On the calendar, summer commences in June, but it is only around the middle of July, when the rainy season ends and the Pacific anticyclone increases in strength all at once, that the really searing heat starts, and this will continue until August. In past times, people would cool themselves down by hanging *sudare* (bamboo blinds) over their windows to provide shade, hanging wind chimes to provide refreshing sounds, fanning themselves with *uchiwa* (paper fans), and sitting in *touisu* (cane chairs) slurping down cold noodles such as *soumen* or *hiyamugi* in order to get through the summer.

Nowadays in big cities, there are many days on which temperatures exceed 35°C, which is close to body temperature, and “heat islands” are forming. Against this background, an increasing number of people are making use of the wisdom of older generations and trying to lead environmentally conscious lifestyles, playing their part in controlling the increasing temperature in the cities.

ことばの歳時記 ～7月の季語～

日本では、梅雨が明けると、いよいよ夏本番です。
ジリジリと肌を焼く強烈な太陽が降り注ぎ、極暑、酷暑、炎暑、大暑といった季語があてはまる季節がやってきます。
暦の上では、6月から夏ですが、梅雨が明ける7月中旬頃から、太平洋高気圧が一気に勢力を強め、焼けつくような暑さが8月まで続きます。そんな暑さを乗り切るために、昔の人は、日除けの「簾(すだれ)」を窓にかけ、涼しげな音色の「風鈴」をつるし、「団扇(うちわ)」で扇ぎ、「莫塵(ごご)」や「籐椅子(とういす)」に座って、「素麺(そうめん)」や「冷や麦(ひやむぎ)」をすすって、涼をとっていました。

昨今、大都会では、体温に近い35°Cを超える日が多く、ヒートアイランド現象が起こっています。そんな中、日本人の昔ながらの知恵を生かし、環境に優しい生活を意識する人が増えており、都会の気温上昇抑制にも一役買っています。