

A Calendar of Words Seasonal Words for March

The traditional Japanese name for March is *yayoi*. The “*ya*” in *yayoi* literally means “at any moment now” or “ever more,” and “*oi*” means “to grow.” *Yayoi* therefore refers to the month when plants start to grow thicker and thicker.

As might be expected, many seasonal words for March are related to plants. One such example is *natane-tsuyu* (also *natane-zuyu*), a word which literally means “rapeseed rain.” *Tsuyu*, or the rainy season, is generally considered the period that begins roughly twenty days before and ends roughly twenty days after the summer solstice. However, regions west of Kanto along the Pacific coast sometimes experience unsettled weather from around mid March to early April, just when the warmth of spring finally begins to set in. This unsettled weather is called *shunrin* (long rain of spring), in reference to the long drizzling rain that continues during this period, or *natane-tsuyu*, because it starts to rain when rape blossoms reach full bloom slightly before the cherry blossoms.

In Japan, the fiscal year ends in March, and a new year begins in April. For this reason, March is often described as the season of farewells or departures, but it is also a season when spirits soar in anticipation of new beginnings. Along with the scents of spring, we hope the spring flowers will deliver wonderful new encounters to you all.

ことばの歳時記 さいじき がつかきご ～3月の季語～

3月の別名を弥生(やよい)と呼びますが、弥生の「弥(いや)」は「いよいよ」「ますます」という意味があり、草木がいよいよ生い茂る月ということで「やよひ」となったと言われています。

ちなみに3月の季語には植物が多いのが特徴です。例えば菜種梅雨(なたねづゆ)、梅雨といえは夏至(げし)の前後、それぞれ約20日ずつの雨期として知られていますが、関東より西の太平洋側では春のあたたかさがようやく定まってきた3月中旬から4月はじめにかけて、ぐずついた天気がつづくことがあり、これを春霖(しゅんりん)と言ったり、菜種梅雨と言ったりします。春のしとしと降る長雨の意味ですが、桜の開花より少し前の、菜の花が咲き乱れるころに降る雨なので、こう呼ばれているそうです。

日本では3月が年度末であり4月には新年度を迎えます。3月は「別れの季節」「旅立ちの季節」とよく言われますが、なぜか心が浮き立つ季節でもあります。草花が運んでくる春の香りとともに、素敵な出会いが研修生・技能実習生のみなさんにも訪れますように。