

The World of Cacti and Succulents — Cultivars of Genera *Astrophytum* and *Haworthia* Bred in Japan[©]

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The first to come to mind when one thinks of breeding work done in cacti is the introduction of grafted *Gymnocalycium* 'Hibotan' (aka red cap or moon cactus) which was developed in Japan and exported in large wholesale quantities since around 1968 for about 20 years. However propagation involves labor-intensive grafting work and currently commercially competitive production is done in places like Korea and China. Commercially available 'Hibotan' in Japan these days are mostly imported from those countries.

Despite such commercialization, there are special groups of cacti and succulents in Japan, which are only known to cactophiles and succulent enthusiasts.

As commonly known, the family Cactaceae is native to New World, including the U.S.A., Mexico, and South American countries. *Astrophytum* is a predominantly Mexican genus (partly U.S.A., in Texas) that consists of 5 or 6 species and several varieties. *Haworthia*, of *Liliaceae* family, is a large South African succulent genus of approximately 100 species. In recent years since the late 1970s with *Astrophytum* and late 1980s with *Haworthia*, many wild-collected plants were available for the international market. Keen Japanese hobbyists selected clones with favorable phenotypes and used them to breed new and more appealing selections such as:

- *Astrophytum asterias* 'Kabuto' (Fig. 1)
- *Astrophytum myriostigma* 'Ranpo Gyoku' (Fig. 2)
- *Haworthia truncata* 'Gyokusen' (Fig. 3)
- *Haworthia maughanii* 'Manzo Millenium' (Fig. 4)
- *Haworthia correcta* (Fig. 5)
- *Haworthia picta* (Fig. 6)



Figure 1. *Astrophytum asterias* 'Kabuto'.



Figure 2. *Astrophytum myriostigma* 'Ranpo Gyoku'.



Figure 3. *Haworthia truncata* 'Gyokusen Sakai Spiral'.



Figure 4. *Haworthia maughanii* 'Manzo Millenium'.



Figure 5. *Haworthia correcta*.



Figure 6. *Haworthia picta*.

Systematic breeding efforts soon took on more traditional tastes and styles, like those of Japanese classical horticulture of variegated *Rhapis excelsa* 'Kannon Chiku', *Rohdea japonica* 'Omoto', and *Neofinetia falcata* 'Fuki Ran', which are considered an elegant and graceful hobbies of naturalists.

These groups of Japanese cultivars are lately much sought after internationally.