

# Mimitaro

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## **Dreams grow from strawberries!**

In this issue, Mimitaro talked to the operator of Takano Strawberries (*Takano Ichigo-en*) in Ryuo, Ms. Era de Oliveira Lilia Kimie.



I came to Japan 20 years ago from Brazil, and have worked at factories for a long time, but I became involved in this line of business after an unexpected turn of events. It all started when I went pear picking in Ryuo with friends some 13 years ago. We came upon an older woman by the name of Mrs. Takano on the side of the road carrying a bag full of vegetables and we bought some from her. Since then, whenever we buy some of her crops, Mrs. Takano would ask me and my husband to help out in her farm work. We enjoyed farming very much, which is totally different from the work we do in the factory. It also relieved some of our stress. Two or three times a week, we stop by her farm on the way home from our night shift to assist her in harvesting, carrying the soil, among other chores. About ten years passed by in this manner and when Mrs. Takano's health condition deteriorated, she became worried about how she could go on maintaining her crops. She told me then, “*I can entrust my strawberries to someone like you*”, and that's what she did, she handed over the management of her strawberry farm to me. When I began to consider what lies ahead in the future, and the fact that I could not work forever in a factory, and since I had no intention of going back to my home country, I thought of giving agriculture, which could be a lifelong endeavor, a try. Without hesitation, I resigned from my job in the factory and worked with Mrs. Takano for a year, while being properly trained in the cultivation of strawberries. I became independent a couple of years ago. Last year, in addition to 5 strawberry houses, 2 additional new structures made possible from a loan we acquired were built on a land we have bought, and we are now cultivating 10,000 strawberry plants. Since strawberries are delicate crops to grow, it is difficult to determine what may occur, but so far, everything is going well and we barely produce enough strawberries to meet the demands.

Before I started managing the strawberry farm, I underestimated the work involved in it and was confident that I could handle it without much effort since Mrs. Takano at her age, did everything all by herself, but then, I realized that it was a huge mistake. In growing strawberries, one has to visit the greenhouse every day, morning and evening, provide them with water, fertilizer, keep the temperature under control and check the condition of each strawberry. The harvest season is from mid-December until late May, and when that is over, the cultivation of new seedlings will follow, so there really is no time to slack off all throughout the year. Management involves

receiving orders, delivering strawberries to shops and customers' houses and also dealing with customers who come for strawberry-picking. I ask my husband and son to assist me whenever they are available from their individual jobs during harvest time because I cannot manage on my own. There isn't a day when I don't feel nervous because I need to make sure that the strawberries ordered by the customers are fresh and in good condition, furthermore, there should be sufficient supply since we also sell directly. On the contrary, I also worry about leftovers that may rot. When bad weather continues, harvest gets delayed and a snowfall may open holes in the vinyl of the greenhouse if not taken care of at once. There was an instance when the greenhouse collapsed due to a typhoon, and times like these give me sleepless nights. In the strawberry farm business, the time or day of the week does not matter, such as during preparation for early morning shipment before the break of dawn. In this sense, being an ordinary worker then may have been more comfortable, having fixed working days and days off on weekends. But one remark from the customers, saying “*How delicious!*” our strawberries are, takes away all the hardships.

My husband and I often talk about the good fortune that came my way, which was having met Mrs. Takano and owning a greenhouse in this locality. The folks around this area are very warm-hearted and are even helpful with the management of my strawberry farm. I am grateful to a lot of people who assisted me in matters I could not possibly have done on my own, like the preparation of documents in the loan application for the construction of the greenhouse. When I deliver strawberries nearby, everyone offers me a drink of tea wherever I go. It is not surprising for foreigners like us living in Japan, especially in old-fashioned areas, to differ in our way of thinking with the local people, depending on their culture and age. As far as I am concerned, the most important thing is to listen well and respect each person I talk to and try my best to satisfy and pay careful attention to each and every customer.

At present, the Takanos are doing well and are still growing vegetables. They visit the greenhouse almost every day and give me advice. Because of this, many people often refer to me as “Kimie Takano”, thinking that I am a relative of the couple. In honor of the Takanos for their kindness, I intend to keep the name, “Takano Strawberries” for good. It is my dream that one day, I could grow a brand of strawberries that Shiga would be proud of.



## Engaging in agriculture

Blessed with water and a fertile land from the lake and mountains, the people of Shiga prefecture have earned their living sustained by their abundant nature. Together with fishery and livestock production, agriculture, such as cultivation of rice, vegetables, fruit trees, flowers, tea, etc., flourished in the old days and “agriculture that cares about the environment” with concern for the water of Lake Biwa is also being implemented. Recently, beginners in agriculture have increased for various reasons like wanting to experience nature or the desire to live a healthy life. The following are information for those who are not satisfied with simple vegetable gardening in verandas and gardening in their yards alone, and would like to make more crops.



◆ **For those who want to enjoy agriculture:** Rent a farm. A rental farm is a small area of land that you can rent at a reasonable price where you can grow your choice of vegetables and flowers. It is your very own small farm. There are rental farms such as allotment gardens managed by the city hall, JA (Japan Agricultural Cooperative), NPO corporations, private farms, etc. Please contact each one respectively as conditions may vary for each.

◆ **For those who want to work in agriculture:** Make the necessary preparations by taking the following steps first!

### 1. Gather information

- Consult at the Farming Consultation Desk: 2<sup>nd</sup> flr. Shiga Prefecture Agricultural Education Information Center (*syuunou soudan madoguchi*) 1-2-20 Matsumoto, Otsu City Tel. 077-523-5505
- Participate in agricultural events and seminars

### 2. Experience hands-on farming Participate in agricultural internship (1 to 6 weeks)

### 3. Acquire skills

- Study at the Shiga Prefectural Agricultural College (1-year course or 2-year course)
- Undergo training from farmers practicing advanced agriculture and from agricultural corporations



#### **Human Resources Fostering Fund for Next Generation Farmers** (*nougyou jisedai ninaite ikusei kikin*)

A system granting 1.5 million yen annually for a maximum of 2 years to those aiming to become future farmers who will undergo training on advanced farming from agricultural instructors certified by the prefecture, etc., and prefectural agricultural colleges. (Conditions may apply.)

4. **Make the preparations** To engage in agriculture, one method is to be employed in an agricultural corporation or to work for a farmer, while the other is to be on a self-employed basis. There are some who become self-employed farmers after working in agricultural corporations, etc.

- ① **Those who will work in agricultural corporations, etc.** Look for job placements at Hello Work, “Shiga Prefecture Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Owners’ Fostering Fund”, or search for employers in agricultural corporation websites, etc.
- ② **Those who will be self-employed:** In addition to “technical skills”, it is also necessary to prepare “funds” and “agricultural land”.

▲ **Secure the necessary funds** To start in agriculture, you need initial investment funds (agricultural land lease fee, machineries, facilities, etc.), working capital (such as fertilizers, pesticides, expenses for lighting and fuel), and you must have a fund for your own living expenses.

**Farming Fund for Youths** (*seinentou syuunou shikin*) A system that lends funds without interest to those who are accredited as certified new farmers embarking in agriculture. (Conditions may apply.)

▲ **Secure the agricultural land** Buying, selling and leasing of agricultural lands are managed from the perspective of maintaining the rate of self-sufficiency in food throughout the country, etc. and agricultural lands are secured in the following ways:

- The procedure for acquiring the right to a land takes place after an examination by the agricultural committee of cities and towns.
- \* There are also measures for taking over an agricultural land with no successor.
- Notify the intention to buy, sell or lease an agricultural land at the agricultural administrative division of cities and towns, and acquire the right through a public notice by the Agricultural Land Utilization Accumulation Plan.
- Apply to borrow a farmland mediated by the Shiga Prefecture Agricultural Land Intermediary Management Organization





## Savor the blessings of nature!



In Shiga, there are many places to enjoy nature where you can pick fruits, experience hands-on activities, interact with animals, and more. Let's go out with family and friends and experience nature's fresh blessings!

### [Facilities where you can enjoy nature in Shiga prefecture]



fruit picking



harvesting vegetables



flowers



hands-on activities



animals



#### • Agripark Ryuo



strawberry, cherry, peach



corn, potato, sweet potato



lavender



rice planting / reaping



sheep, pony, rabbit

6526 Yamanoue, Ryuo-cho, Gamo-gun

Tel: 0748-57-1311

<http://www.biwa.ne.jp/~aguri-p/index.html>

#### • Takano Strawberry Farm



strawberry

3469 Yamanoue, Ryuo-cho, Gamo-gun

Tel: 090-9119-2850

<http://takano-garden0412.business.site/>

Instagram: takanomaykgarden



#### • Blume no Oka (Blumen Hugel Farm)



rose



animal milking, sausage making



alpaca, rabbit, guinea pig

843 Nishioji, Hino-cho, Gamo-gun

Tel: 0748-52-2611

<http://www.blumenooka.jp/blume/konna.html>

#### • Rock Bay Garden



strawberry



duck feeding



goat, rabbit

1431 Oroshimo-cho, Kusatsu City

Tel: 077-568-3078

<http://www.rockbaygarden.com/>



#### • Makino Pick Land



strawberry, cherry, blueberry, grape, chestnut



sweet potato

835-1 Terakubo, Makino-cho, Takashima City

Tel: 0740-27-1811

<http://xn--ncke3dzaw0b5dze4d.com/>

or マキノピックランド.com



#### • Rakunoshya Nagomi no Sato Tourist Farm



strawberry, blueberry, mulberry



egg gathering



goat

2579 Shimokoga, Adogawa-cho, Takashima-shi

Tel: 090-1150-3659

<https://rakuno-shya.jimdo.com/>

#### • Rosa and Berry Tawada Farm and Garden



blueberry, grape



corn, potato



rose, wild grasses / flowers



handicraft

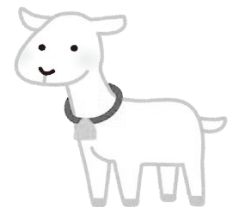


sheep

605-10 Tawada, Maibara City

Tel: 0749-54-2323

<http://www.rb-tawada.com/>



#### • Dainaka Kakimi Strawberry Farm



strawberry, grape

483 Dainaka-cho, Omihachiman City

Tel: 0748-32-1231

<http://www.dainaka.net/index.html>

#### • Minakuchi Technos Farm



strawberry



tomato, sweet potato

5940-4 Minakuchi, Minakuchi-cho, Koka City

Tel: 0748-63-5811

<http://technos-farm.com/>

#### • Narita Ranch



goat, sheep, pony, rabbit, dog, cat, chicken

696 Shinji, Konan-cho, Koka City

Tel: 0748-86-3341

<http://narita-fureai.net/>

#### • Omimaiko Strawberry Orchard



strawberry



sweet potato

Minamikomatsu, Otsu City

Tel: 090-1155-1515

<http://www.roji15.com/>





# Event Information



## ◆Hachiman Festival 4/14 (Sat) • 4/15 (Sun)

Himure Hachimangu (257 Miyauchi-cho, Omihachiman City)

An intangible folk cultural asset taking pride in its more than 1,000 years of history. The Torch Festival is held on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April and the Drum Festival on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

[INQ] Tourist Information Office Omihachiman station north exit  
Tel. 0748-33-6061

## ◆Minakuchi Hikiyama Festival 4/19 (Thu) • 4/20 (Fri)

Minakuchi-jinja (3-14 Miya no mae, Minakuchi-cho, Koka City)

An intangible folk cultural asset of the prefecture. Minakuchi bayashi music is performed atop the magnificent hikiyama (floats).

[INQ] Koka City Tourism Association Tel. 0748-60-2690

## ◆Korei Taisai (Taga Festival) 4/22 (Sun)

Taga Taisha (604 Taga, Taga-cho, Inukami-gun)

A Shinto ritual performed by an estimated number of 400 people and approximately 40 men on horses.

[INQ] Taga Tourism Association Tel. 0749-48-1553

## ◆The 50th Kusatsu Shukuba Festival 4/29 (Sun.)

Along Tokaido and Nakasendo streets around JR Kusatsu station and Kusatsu City Hall area. There will be a parade displaying costumes of different eras, stalls, stage performances

[INQ] Kusatsu Shukuba Festival Executive Committee secretariat  
Tel. 077-566-3219

## ◆Azuchi Nobunaga Festival 6/3 (Sun.)

Azuchi Castle ruins (Shimotoira, Azuchi-cho, Omihachiman City) Parade of armored samurai warriors, Azuchi open market and other events

[INQ] Azuchi Nobunaga Festival Council Tel. 0748-46-2346

## ◆Yagawa Shrine Tanabata Festival 7/7 (Sat.)

Yagawa-jinja (70 Morishiri, Konan-cho, Koka City)

The children's tanabata bamboo ornaments will decorate the shrine's premises. Koga-style hand-held fireworks will be displayed for the festival's finale. Admission is free.

[INQ] Yagawa Shrine Tel. 0748-86-3141

## ◆Tetsudo Tanabata Train Held in early July

Shigaraki Kogen Railway (192 Nagano, Shigaraki-cho, Koka City)

Wishes written on strips of paper (tanzaku) will decorate the train's interior. There are music performances and gifts for the children.

Train fare: Shigaraki~Kibukawa

Adult ¥460 Child ¥230

[INQ] Shigaraki Kogen Railway Co. Ltd.

Tel. 0748-82-3391



**The next issue of Mimitaro is scheduled to be published in July.**

## Spring is the season of flowers!

### ◆The 4th Nagahama Azalea Bonsai Exhibition

5/26 (Sat.) until 6/10 (Sun.)

Keiunkan (2-5 Minato-cho, Nagahama City)

Entrance fee: Adult ¥500 Child (up to Jr. HS) ¥200

[INQ] Nagahama Tourism Association Tel. 0749-65-6521

### ◆Moriyama Rose & Herb Garden mid-May until mid-June

(2840 Sazukawa-cho, Moriyama City)

Entrance fee: Adult ¥200 Jr. HS students & below ¥100

[INQ] Moriyama Rose & Herb Garden Tel. 077-585-1975

### ◆Hydrangea (Ajisai) Park mid to late June

(Lakeside, Yogo-cho, Nagahama City)

[INQ] Oku-Biwa Tourist Association Tel. 0749-82-5909

### ◆Mizu no Mori ("water forest") Water Botanical Garden

(1091 Oroshimo-cho, Kusatsu City)

Entrance fee: Adult ¥300

Univ, Sr. HS ¥250 Jr. HS, Elem. ¥150

[INQ] Kusatsu Aquatic Botanical Garden Mizu no Mori

Tel. 077-568-2332



## Information from SIA



### ~ Shiga Prefecture's Training for Nursing Care Staff ~

A training for foreigners to learn the necessary skills in nursing care that would enable them to work in the actual workplace is held in Shiga prefecture.

Contents: Nursing care staff initial training (acquisition of qualifications upon completion of the course in accordance with the law)

Target participants: Foreign residents of the prefecture (participants will be interviewed)

\* Tuition is free but textbooks will be shouldered by the participants.

[INQ] Machikado Care Shiga Net (an organization entrusted by the prefecture) Tel. 0748-60-2899

### ~ Scholarship Information ~

#### ◆ Orizuru-kai (a public interest foundation)

Scholarships, enrollment benefits, funding for promotion to the next grade in school, and others, are provided to Shiga prefecture's orphaned children of traffic accident victims (until senior high school graduation).

[http://www.pref.shiga.lg.jp/c/kotsu-s/dayori-1/files/109\\_1.pdf](http://www.pref.shiga.lg.jp/c/kotsu-s/dayori-1/files/109_1.pdf)

[INQ] Orizuru-kai (4-1-1 Kyomachi, Otsu City)

Shiga prefectural government office Traffic Strategy Section

Tel. 077-528-3682

#### ◆ Accepting Foreign Student Applicants for the Biwako Scholarship Year 2018 !

Who may apply: International students, university • junior college students who are residing in Shiga prefecture

(High school students are not eligible to apply since the year 2016) Please refer to the 2018 application guidelines at the following website: <http://www.s-i-a.or.jp>

[INQ] Shiga Intercultural Association for Globalization (SIA)

Tel. 077-526-0931