



### Tree/Shrub of the month:

**White mulberry— *Morus alba*.** The caterpillars of the silk moth feed on the leaves of white mulberry and produce the cocoons that silk is spun from. In this trip to Japan I went to a silk factory and saw the process in action—the caterpillars were fed the leaves however, they weren't on the trees. The tree on the right is growing in West Hill. It has a lovely leaf shape with good autumn colour and is perfect for a medium sized garden in a position sheltered from cold winds. It can tolerate dry conditions once established.



### Japan 2019:

I returned to Japan in late September to see my friends at Mokuyousha Tree Care in Chino, Nagano Prefecture. The weather was hot—21 - 26 °C during the day and the rice harvest was in full swing in the surrounding fields.



Chino is in a very fertile valley in the Japanese Alps where rice, buckwheat, soya and many different fruits and vegetables are grown. The fields are generally small and seem to be family run with different generations involved. The soil is very dark and rich due to its volcanic nature and fertile alluvial flood water from the mountain rivers.



I spent my time helping with some of the work and was especially pleased to do some pine pruning. This involved *mo-miage*—removing old pine needles, pruning back tips to 2 buds and thinning the crown to promote new dense growth on the branch tips. This is a red pine / *Pinus densiflora*..



Nearby was a great example of a black pine / *Pinus thunbergii* by the house, below. The pine in the photo on the rhs below is *Pinus palustris* and is being pruned by Norie-san. These trees were at his uncles house in Minowa, where he as a fruit farm growing apples and peaches. The cypress is being pruned by Kanta-san. The apples are grown and produced for the local market. We were given some to eat for lunch—they were large



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Over the two weeks I spent in Japan I managed to look around the streets of Chino as well as getting out into the countryside. I saw some lovely trees of various sizes: the Umbrella Tree, a red pine / *Pinus densiflora*, was a tree up in the mountains and was at least 300 years old. The tree was propped and was probably is what is known as a Heritage Tree here in the UK.



and very sweet.

We visited Maruhachi Nursery, near Matsumoto, growing forestry and ornamental plants. We saw forestry seedlings produced for planting in the mountains. We were shown their propagation unit and also looked at their niwaki trees. Kamijo Yuichiro, the manager, said that the demand for niwaki had dropped dramatically over the past years as younger people



There were also numerous examples of beautiful niwaki and trees around Shinto temples and shrines.

were less interested and wanted easy maintenance gardens. He produces trees from both seed and cuttings. On the lhs above are pine seedlings in plug trays. On the right cuttings of various trees and shrubs. The niwaki trees were yew, some of which were over 60 years old and are pruned and undercut on a regular basis. Below on the lhs is Kamijo Yuichiro and on the right the niwaki yew.



It is interesting to hear their views on the UK re. trees—they think the standard of tree care is very high and we all love trees much more than the Japanese and yet I think we probably have the same view of them! I am looking forward to retuning again next year - I have found them to be such a generous group of people willing to spend time showing me around and exchanging ideas on tree work and trees has been fascinating. Typhoon Hagibis, Saturday 12th, led to Kotaro (head of Mokuyousha) and his family being evacuated for a time due to flooding, I have heard that they are all ok, but the river burst its banks further down causing flooding.