

# Kandelia obovate habitat in Kiire

Designated as a Special Natural Monument on March 29, 1952

Area designated: Kagoshima City Kiirenukumi-cho      Managed by: Kagoshima City



Mangrove forests develop in intertidal zones in tropical and subtropical areas. These intertidal zones consist of inlets with gentle waves and mud sediment, and estuaries where freshwater and ocean water mix.

*Kandelia obovate* (known in Japanese as “Ryukyu kougai”) are a species of mangrove in the Rhizophoraceae family. They received their Japanese name for their seedlings’ resemblance to Ryukuan hairpins (“kougai”). They are now commonly referred to as “mehirugi” in Japanese.

Mehirugi are referred to as vivipary (live-bearing) plants because their seeds germinate inside the fruit and continue to receive nutrients from the mother tree before falling to the ground after growing to a certain size. They are carried away by the tide and take root upon reaching the land’s surface, finally growing into seedlings. The natural distribution of mehirugi spans from Southeast Asia to the Ryukyu Islands (including Amami Oshima, Yakushima, and Tanegashima) and the Satsuma Peninsula. Mehirugi on the Ryukyu Islands typically grow to be around four to seven meters, but here in Kiire, the northernmost natural environment for mehirugi, mehirugi typically grow to be about two meters tall.



This area, being the northernmost natural environment for the mehirugi, received Cultural Property of Japan designation as a Natural Monument in March 1921 and as a Special Natural Monument in March 1952.

It has been said that the Kiire mehirugi was brought to the Kagoshima mainland by feudal lord Kimotsuki Kaneatsu in the Satsuma Domain’s “triumphant return” after invading Ryukyu. Thus, the mehirugi here today conveys a part of Japan’s history.

[Month] 2024

Kagoshima City Board of Education