

Muscat of Alexandria Grape Culture Developed in Okayama (1)

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Summary

Muscat of Alexandria grapevines (*Vitis vinifera* L.) were first imported into Japan in the late 19th century. Okayama grape growers, Kumataro Omura and Yoshio Yamanouchi, began to culture them in a greenhouse in 1886.

They finally produced grape bunches successfully that were purchased by foreigners in Kobe at an extremely high price. "Sozan-kai", a society of growers where the know-how of Muscat cultivation was severely controlled, played a large role in the early development of the Muscat industry during the early 20th century. Use of heated greenhouses expanded rapidly because of the higher marketability of bunches shipped unusually early. Such early heating, however, resulted in the decline of the vine vigor, which caused grower's over-fertilization. Dr. Mamoru Osaki, a technical expert of the Okayama Agricultural Experimental Station, established a grower's association to improve the condition of Muscat greenhouses. He analyzed many greenhouse soils proposed a reformation of Muscat cultivation by advocating "Return to nature". His improvement, however, was interrupted by the 2nd World War.