

## **Tenth International Asparagus Symposium**

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The Tenth International Asparagus Symposium (XIAS ) was held on August 30 to September 2, 2001 and hosted by Niigata University, Niigata City, Japan. The symposium was held under the joint auspices of four esteemed organizations; the International Society for Horticultural Science (ISHS), the Japanese Society for Horticultural Science (JSHS), the Institute of Physical and Chemical Research (RIKEN) and the National Research Institute of Vegetable, Ornamental Plants and Tea (NIVOT). Support for the Symposium was by the Field Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry, Faculty of Agriculture, Niigata University and by numerous Japanese seed companies and related organizations.

Dr. Hajime Araki convened and chaired the XIAS and was aided greatly by Dr. Atsuko Uragami the vice-chair and the organizing committee of this well organized and executed Symposium.

A welcoming reception greeted the 81 participants and accompanying people from 19 countries at the Okura Hotel, setting the stage for the ongoing social interactions and scientific collaboration that has been evident between the world's asparagus researchers since the first International Asparagus Symposium. The Symposium's opening addresses and formal welcomes were presented by Dr. Araki, Dr. Masaru Toyota, Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture, Niigata University and by Brian Benson and Dr. Mike Nichols.

Sixty one papers were presented (31 as oral presentations and 30 as posters) covering research activities under the topics of agronomy, production systems, cultivar evaluation, genetics, breeding, physiology, biochemistry, pathology and post-harvest. Five guest speakers were invited by the organizing committee to present information in their area of expertise. Chen Guangyu (China) presented a very enlightening talk on the development of the Chinese Asparagus Industry and an overview of the asparagus research activities in China. Chee-kok Chin (USA) presented the recent new information on the medicinal properties and antimutagenic activities of asparagus constituents which reinforced our appreciation for this excellent vegetable. Ross Lill (New Zealand) informed the symposium participants of the advantages of controlled atmosphere storage conditions for asparagus spears. Yukio Ozaki (Japan) spoke on the use of inter and intra-ploid crosses and their use in gene mapping in asparagus and Hiroyuki Kohmura (Japan) gave an excellent presentation on the many methods used in the cultivation of asparagus in Japan. The first report that *Asparagus officinalis* L. has a day length response to dry matter partitioning and carbohydrate accumulation in the storage root system was presented by David Woolley of Massey University, New Zealand. Following

presentations on the estimates of totals CHO accumulation in the storage root system and the distribution of roots in the rhizosphere provided a better understanding of how the physiology and morphology of the asparagus plant is related to spear yields. The quality of all of the papers at the symposium were excellent and each presentation was followed by interested interactions via questions and comments.

An afternoon symposium tour of the asparagus research trials at Niigata University was very informative and the participants were able to appreciate the difficulties in converting paddy rice land to asparagus production land. Participants initiated the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Asparagus Cultivar Trial to evaluate asparagus cultivars on a world wide basis at a night meeting.

Three tours were arranged for the participants. A pre-symposium tour was offered to visit the Tokyo Wholesale Market and learn of the machinations required in the importation of asparagus into Japan and Japanese market organization. The pre-symposium tour group then traveled to Nagano to visit this asparagus production area before continuing on to Niigata. On August 30, all of the participants and their accompanying persons traveled through the scenic mountains to the Kitakata region in Fukushima Prefecture to see the various production methods used by asparagus growers. A lunch and tour of a Shogun's Castle followed the field tour. A post-symposium tour group went to see the asparagus production in greenhouses in Kagawa prefecture and had sightseeing along the way and in Kyoto.

The evening banquet of September 1 provided additional opportunities for all to enjoy tasty Japanese cuisine and many forms of liquid refreshments. This social gathering was filled with many discussions on asparagus, making new friends and rekindling old friendships and collaborations. During the symposium in Niigata, 2 social tours were held to provide an opportunity for the accompanying persons to get in-touch and to experience the Japanese culture.

Brian Benson (USA) passed on the chairmanship of the Asparagus Working Group for ISHS to Dr. Agostino Falavigna (Italy) at the opening ceremonies and Dr. Mikolai Knaflowski (Poland) was elected as chairman-elect during the Symposium. The XI International Asparagus Symposium was elected to be held in the Netherlands in 2005. Contact information for the XI IAS should be made to Pierre Lavrijsen, Asparagus BV, by e-mail ([plavrijsen@asparagus.nl](mailto:plavrijsen@asparagus.nl)) or by Fax (31-773979909).