

“Flowers of Birds of the Twelve Months” by Fujiwara Teika (1167–1241)

First Month

Willow

Day by day,
green deepens the willow.
Is it the color of the spring wind
fluttering and swaying?

Uguisu (Japanese nightingale)

The first uguisu
in the bamboo bush.
An early morning
near the terraces.

Second Month

Cherry Blossom

The February sky of cherry blossoms,
Fragrant reflections
On the sleeves of passers-by;
Sprigs in their hair.

Pheasant

A spring time hunter,
His trail in the mist.
The cry of a pheasant
Calling his mate.

Third Month

Wisteria

Wisteria blooms
The memories of spring.
Your color carries
Passing remembrance.

Skylark

Within the cries of skylarks
I rejoice
In the violet field.
Oh, spring days.

Fourth Month

Cuckoo

Oh, cuckoo, feel at home,
In a distant village.
Unohana blossoms, and
May is around the corner.

Unohana (Flower of Dentzia)

With summer’s arrival,
The airing of white robes.
Unohana at the fence
Heavy with blossoms.

Fifth Month

Tachibana (Wild Oranges)

Cuckoo sings
In May.
At every door
Fragrant wild oranges.

Kuina (Water Rail)

Summer dawn,
Kuina tapping at the door.
Somebody, or is that
Only her fragrance?

Sixth Month

Nadeshiko (Pinks)

The blazing sun
Of the summer
Yet, nadeshiko bloom adoringly.

Comorant

Short summer nights
Amid the blazes,
Comorant-fishing
In the stream.

Seventh Month

Ominaeshi (Patrina)

As has been vowed,
Only in autumn
Ominaeshi bloom
In the sky of the Star Festival.

Kasasagi (Magpie)

Over autumn sky
Kasasagi bridge their wings
For the night of distant lovers.

Eighth Month

Hagi (Bush clover)

Autumn deepens
With the winds of many colors.
Soon the sparse bush clovers
Will change their coats.

Wild Geese

Half the autumn has passed,
Watching and waiting for
The first flock of geese;
Their sharp cries.

Ninth Month

Hana-susuki (Japanese Pampas Grasses)

Hana-susuki,
The dew on their sleeves.
Alas, the passing autumn,
The heartless one.

Quail

Paths of silence
Thick bushes withered.
In early winter's frost,
Quails chirp.

Tenth Month

Chrysanthemum

Chrysanthemums—
If not their fragrance in the frost,
What could be
A remembrance of autumn?

Crane

In the setting sun,
Cranes flock.
Rain clouds of winter
Circle the hill.

Eleventh Month (right panel of slide)

Loquat

Greenless fields
Of wintry days,
Loquat blossoms on evergreen branches—
Or, is that a frost?

Plover

Plovers chirp on
Shoals in the Kamo River.
From the moonlight
The hills play hide and seek.

Twelfth Month (left panel of slide)

Prunus

Snow on the fence
Reflecting—
Prunus branches
On this side of the New Year.

Mizudori (Mandarin Duck)

Flakes of snow
Float onto the pond
Year after year,
Like layers of feathers.

(Translations from Yoshiko Kakudo and So Kam Ng, *Art with the Written Word from China and Japan*, exhibition brochure (San Francisco: Asian Art Museum, 1985).