

## Column

### Annual Events in Japan

## Winter Cometh with *Komo* Wrapping

As the strength of the sun's rays begins to wane and the landscape takes on the desolate garb of winter, it is time for the traditional annual ceremony of wrapping *komo*, or straw mats, around the trunks of pine and other trees to protect them from pests. Recent research indicates that *komo* wrapping is not as effective as once believed, and today it is generally practiced only in those districts where it has become something that gives poetic effect to the late fall season. Being an evergreen and believed to have spiritual power because of its clean and fresh fragrance, the pine has long found a fond spot in the hearts of the Japanese, being used as a New Year decoration and depicted in Noh theatre backdrops. It is hoped that ways will be found that meet contemporary needs to continue the pine tradition, an indispensable part of Japanese life and culture.



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Gardeners wrap pine trunks with *komo* in Soka Matsubara, which is mentioned in haiku poet Matsuo Basho's *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* (1702), and is a National Site of Scenic Beauty located in Soka City, Saitama Prefecture. Two days are taken to carefully wrap on the straw mats.

