

**You said:**

What other Western travelers to Japan in the 19th century besides Robert Fortune and Francis Hall specifically mentioned visiting the gardens and nurseries of Dang-o-zaka, Su-mae-yah/Soomee/Somei or Sendagi?

**Copilot said:**

**Copilot**

The short answer is: **very few named Western travelers explicitly recorded visits to the Somei–Sendagi–Dangozaka nursery district**, and outside of Robert Fortune (1860s) and Francis Hall (1859–66 diary), the evidence becomes **thin, indirect, or ambiguous**. However, there *are* a handful of additional 19th-century figures who either:

- **very likely visited or described the Somei nursery belt (often without naming it clearly), or**
- **left accounts that scholars connect to that area (Sendagi/Dangozaka/Somei horticultural quarter).**

Below is a carefully filtered list, separating **firm / probable / indirect** attributions.

## **1. Probable additional Western visitors who mention the nursery district**

### **1. Rutherford Alcock (British diplomat, 1859–1864)**

- Book: *The Capital of the Tycoon* (1863).
- Alcock describes excursions out of Edo/Yedo to see “**gardens,**” “**flower farms,**” and **suburban horticultural districts** supplying the city.
- While he does **not consistently use the name “Somei”**, the areas he describes north of Edo (toward Komagome/Sugamo) align with the known nursery belt that included Somei and Sendagi.

### **2. Sir Harry Parkes (British minister, 1860s–70s, via dispatches & letters)**

- Parkes and other diplomats made **documented excursions to plant-growing districts near Edo.**
- His circle overlapped directly with Fortune and Hall.
- References survive to visits to **“native gardeners” and plant suppliers near Yedo.**

### 3. Josiah Conder (architect, resident 1877–1920)

- Not a traveler in the early Bakumatsu sense, but an early Meiji Western resident deeply engaged in Japanese horticulture.
- In *Landscape Gardening in Japan* (1893), Conder discusses **Edo–Tokyo nursery culture and plant production districts**, including the legacy of Edo-period nurseries north of the city.

## 2. Possible / indirect witnesses tied to the same nursery zone

### 4. Isabella Bird (visited 1878)

- Bird’s *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan* focuses more on the north, but she briefly notes:
  - The **extraordinary cultivation of flowers and trees around Tokyo.**
- She does **not name Somei**, but her remarks correspond to the same horticultural system.

### 5. Basil Hall Chamberlain (resident scholar, 1870s–1900s)

- Wrote extensively about Tokyo and Japanese culture.
- Aware of the **historic nursery districts that supplied Edo**, including Somei origins of cherry varieties.

### 6. Edward S. Morse (American zoologist, 1877–79)

- Lived in Tokyo and recorded daily life and landscapes.

- Mentions **gardens, nurserymen, and cultivated plants**, though not clearly naming Somei/Dangozaka.

### 3. Important contextual point (why the list is so short)

- The **Somei–Sendagi–Dangozaka zone** was a major Edo horticultural center, with:
  - dense concentrations of nurseries,
  - public flower gardens, and
  - commercial plant production.<sup>magiminiland+1</sup>
- Yet:
  - Early foreign visitors had **restricted movement before the 1860s**
  - Even after opening, most wrote **generalized impressions (“gardens near Yedo”)** rather than precise place names
- As a result, we get:
  - **Fortune and Hall = rare explicit identifiers**
  - Others = **implicit or geographically matching descriptions**

## Bottom line

**Beyond Fortune and Hall, the main additional Western figures linked (with varying certainty) are:**

### **Most credible / closest matches**

- **Rutherford Alcock** – described garden districts around Edo consistent with Somei
- **Harry Parkes (and diplomatic circle)** – likely visited nurseries in same region

### **Later descriptive or indirect witnesses**

- **Josiah Conder** – documented the nursery tradition historically
- **Isabella Bird** – noted Tokyo horticulture broadly

- **Basil Hall Chamberlain** – wrote about Edo/Tokyo cultural geography
- **Edward S. Morse** – recorded gardens and cultivated landscapes

On these maps, you can visually reconstruct the nursery belt:

- **Place names**
  - 染井 (Somei)
  - 駒込 (Komagome)
  - 巢鴨 (Sugamo)
  - 千駄木 (Sendagi)
- **Landscape clues**
  - open land vs dense town blocks
  - daimyo gardens
  - agricultural or semi-rural zones

Together, these create exactly the “ring” Alcock described.

---

## What they *don't usually label*

You will **not** see something like:

“Nursery district”

“植木屋地帯 (uekiya area)” (as a mapped category)

Why?

- Edo maps categorized things by:
  - **landownership (samurai vs temple vs townspeople)**
  - **physical features (fields, rivers, roads)**
- Not by **economic specialization** like horticulture

[ Edo city ] ↓ Sendagi / Dangozaka → flower gardens, display ↓ Komagome → transition zone ↓ Somei → dense cluster of nurserymen ↓ Rural outskirts

Edo map clue	What it becomes today
Open fields / blank plots	Fully urbanized neighborhoods
Scattered villages (Somei)	Komagome / Sugamo districts
Garden estates	Parks (Rikugien is still there)
Dangozaka slope	Still a named slope in Bunkyo

How did nurseries influence Tokyo?

Copilot said:

### Copilot

The Edo–Tokyo nursery belt (Somei–Komagome–Sendagi) had a **deep and lasting influence on Tokyo**, far beyond just supplying plants. It shaped the city’s **landscape, culture, economy, and even its identity today**.

Here’s a clear breakdown

## 1. It created Tokyo’s gardening culture

The nursery belt supplied:

- ornamental plants
- bonsai
- seasonal flowers

to **samurai estates, temples, and townspeople**.

### Result:

- Gardening spread from elite daimyo to **ordinary urban households**
- Even small homes displayed pots and seasonal plants

👉 This is why Edo became known as:

a city where *everyone owned and cared about plant*

## 2. It directly produced Japan’s most famous tree

The nurseries of **Somei** developed:

## Somei-yoshino cherry blossom

- Bred and propagated by Edo gardeners
- Distributed widely across Japan in the late Edo / Meiji period

### Lasting impact:

- Today ~80% of Japan's cherry trees are Somei-yoshino
- Tokyo's modern "cherry blossom culture" **comes directly from this nursery zone**

## 3. It shaped Tokyo's park system

Many nursery-adjacent spaces later became **modern parks**:

### Examples:

- **Rikugien** (near Komagome)
- Ueno park area (edge of the nursery zone)
- Various former daimyo gardens

### Why this matters:

- Nurseries supplied plants and expertise for large gardens
- These gardens were later **converted into public parks** in the Meiji era

## 4. It influenced urban form (city structure)

The nursery belt created a **distinct edge to Edo**:

### Before:

- Dense city → gradual transition → rural cultivation

### Today:

- The **same corridor (Komagome–Sendagi–Sugamo)** is still recognizable
- Many roads follow the same routes used to transport plants

## 5. It drove a specialized urban economy

The belt functioned as:

- a **clustered industry district**

### It supported:

- plant growers (植木屋)
- transport networks
- garden designers
- retail flower gardens (花屋敷)

### Economic innovation:

- early **commercial plant branding**
- specialization (azaleas, pines, cherries, etc.)

## 6. It created leisure and tourism culture

Places like **Dangozaka and Sendagi** offered:

- flower viewing
- seasonal exhibitions
- garden visits

### Impact:

- Early form of **urban leisure tourism**
- Mixed:

- science (plant cultivation)
- entertainment (flower viewing)

👉 This is the ancestor of:

- modern **hanami tourism**
- botanical exhibitions
- themed gardens

## 7. It influenced Tokyo's residential identity

Because of the nursery belt:

- Northern Edo became associated with:
  - greenery
  - refined gardens
  - quieter, semi-rural lifestyle

**Today:**

- Areas like **Bunkyo and Komagome** still:
  - feel greener
  - host historic gardens
  - retain a “cultured residential” reputation

How did locals refer to the nursery belt?

Copilot said:

**Copilot**

Locally (in Edo-period Japanese usage), the nursery belt you're asking about was **not usually referred to as one single named “district”** in the way modern historians describe it. Instead, it

was identified through a **cluster of overlapping place-names and occupational terms**. These fall into three main categories:

# 1. Place-based names (what people actually called the area)

## ① 染井 (Somei)

- The most important and widely recognized name.
- Known as a village of **植木屋 (uekiya, nurserymen/gardeners)**.
- By the late Edo period, “Somei” was almost synonymous with professional plant growers.

👉 Locally, people would simply say:

- 「染井の植木屋」 = “the nurserymen of Somei”

---

## ② 千駄木・団子坂 (Sendagi / Dangozaka)

- A **specific slope and neighborhood** adjacent to the nursery zone.
- Known for:
  - flower gardens (花屋敷, hanayashiki),
  - growers who had moved from Somei.

The area had:

- “many gardeners on top of the hill, and ... plants could be seen throughout the year.” Snow Country Nursery

👉 Locally:

- 「千駄木の植木屋」

- 「団子坂の花屋敷」
- 

### ③ 駒込・巣鴨・染井一帯 (Komagome–Sugamo–Somei area)

- Broader geographic label for the nursery belt north of Edo.
- Essentially the same zone Alcock saw as a “ring” of market gardens.

👉 Informal phrasing:

- 「駒込・染井あたり」 (“around Komagome/Somei”)

## 2. Occupational labels (how the landscape was conceptualized)

More than a geographic term, Edo people thought of the area in terms of **profession and function**:

### 植木屋町 (uekiya-machi) – “nurserymen’s quarter”

- Not always an official place-name, but used descriptively.
- Meant a district characterized by plant growers.

### 植木屋 / 植木師 (uekiya / uekishi)

- The gardeners themselves—often used metonymically for the area:
  - “going to the uekiya” could imply going to that district.

## 3. Garden / leisure terminology tied to Dangozaka

### 花屋敷 (hanayashiki) – “flower garden / pleasure garden”

- Specific establishments (like Shisentei at Dangozaka).
- Open to visitors for seasonal flower viewing.
- These were part commercial nursery, part leisure attraction.

👉 Local phrasing:

- 「花屋敷へ行く」 = “go to the flower gardens”

## 4. Why there was no single unified name

This is crucial:

- The “nursery belt” was **not an official administrative district**
- It was a **functional zone spread across multiple villages**
- Edo naming conventions were:
  - **highly local**, and
  - **occupation-based**

So instead of one label like:

“the nursery district”

people used:

- **village names (Somei, Sendagi, Komagome)**
- plus **occupation terms (uekiya)**

## Bottom line

**The most authentic local ways to refer to the nursery belt were:**

- **染井 (Somei)** – the core identity
- **千駄木・団子坂 (Sendagi / Dangozaka)** – specific subareas with gardens
- **駒込・染井あたり** – broader geographic reference

- 植木屋 (uekiya) – the defining occupational label
- 花屋敷 (hanayashiki) – for the public garden/nursery sites

👉 In practice, a contemporary Edo resident would most naturally say something like:

- 「染井の植木屋へ行く」 (“I’m going to the Somei nurseries”)

Result from a few minutes of deeper questioning of MS CoPilot Chat, 05/19/26 am.