

# “AEON Hometown Forests”



## What is “AEON Hometown Forest”?

“AEON Hometown Forest” is created in AEON group stores for customers to enjoy shopping. What can we do as part of our social contribution and environmental preservation activities? Our answer was “forest planting”.

The “AEON Hometown Forest” begins with the planting of saplings originating from the region with local customers. We have used our ingenuity and commitment to grow forests where local customers can watch over the growth of a forest that will eventually nurture a rich ecosystem.



## Three commitments for forest planting

**We plant trees that grow naturally on the land**



Forest retaining regional characteristics

Even if a forest looks similar to any other forest at first glance, differences in climate, soil, and other climatic features make the forest unique to the region. In “AEON Hometown Forests”, we select and plant the kinds of trees that are most suitable for local natural environment and naturally grow on the land by surveying the potential natural vegetation (the composition of plants that would have formed naturally without human intervention in the area) in forests that have been around for a long time, such as shrine and temple forests.

**We mix and plant dozens of different saplings to encourage them to grow while competing with each other**



Many kinds of densely planted saplings

Unlike general greening, many kinds of saplings are planted densely. Densely planted trees will grow while competing with each other for light, and they will form a three-dimensional greening with the combination of the tree layer, sub-tree layer, shrub layer and herb layer. Various trees including sun-loving, shade-loving, heat-tolerant, and cold-resistant trees will grow in places that suit them in different environments and will become a stable forest.

**We ask local customers to take on the lead role in planting saplings one by one**



Holding a tree-planting ceremony

Prior to the opening of a mall, we hold a tree-planting ceremony to carefully plant saplings with local customers one by one. Our forest planting, which began in 1991, has been carried out with customers from all over Japan and across the world, and the total number of trees planted exceeded 10 million in 2013, and the cumulative total has reached 12.12 million as of February 2020.



## Growing “AEON Hometown Forests”

**AEON MALL Tsu Minami**  
Trees planted in October 2018  
Photo taken in October 2018



Immediately after planting

We adopt a method of mixing and planting dozens of different saplings to encourage them to grow while competing with each other.

**AEON MALL Tokoname**  
Trees planted in November 2015  
Photo taken in October 2018



3 years later

We take good care of the trees while leaving them to their natural growth potential.

**AEON MALL Meiwa**  
Trees planted in June 2001  
Photo taken in February 2015



14 years later

Within 10 years, these trees will become a rich forest where creatures such as birds and insects gather.

**AEON Hisai**  
Trees planted in April 1992  
Photo taken in October 2018



26 years later

We hope that this forest will become a locally oriented community and local people will develop the spirit of nurturing greenery.

In addition to the three commitments mentioned above, “AEON Hometown Forest” will grow into a rich forest over a long period of time through various ideas such as improving soil quality and ways of constructing mounds. The forest provides not only a place for us to rest and relax, but also a place for creatures to live in the region. In other words, the forest plays an important role as part of local ecosystem.



Training system for planting management

The staff of each mall take “Planting Management Training” to learn how to manage the forest properly and criteria for trimming branches and leaves, and use the knowledge and skills for daily forest building. About 350 employees have taken this training as of May 2020.





# Surveying creatures in forests!

A variety of creatures have been observed in "AEON Hometown Forests". Therefore, AEON MALL conducted surveys on creatures for the first time in 2019.

The survey was conducted at two locations: AEON MALL Kurashiki (Okayama Prefecture) opened in 1999, and THE OUTLETS HIROSHIMA (Hiroshima Prefecture) opened in 2018. Having conducted surveys on plants and animals in the forest where about 20 years have passed since planting and the forest where not much time has passed since planting, we have learned a lot about the forests.



Plant survey



Animal survey

Recorded the kinds of plants identified and measured the height and thickness of plants within a certain area.

Recorded the kinds of animals identified. This time we only targeted birds and butterflies that are easily visible to us.



# What our survey has discovered about the forests

## (1) Plants

**A forest where a variety of plants grow with the development of the shopping mall**



AEON MALL Kurashiki

Various kinds of trees are mixed and planted in the "AEON Hometown Forest", so the number of plant species per particular area is larger than the number in surrounding natural forests. In particular, at AEON MALL Kurashiki, many different kinds of plants have been discovered that are thought to have grown from naturally carried seeds in addition to the trees planted about 20 years ago. A total of 213 diverse plant species have been identified on the site of the shopping mall (as of November 2019).

**Plant species and forest structure that have something in common with natural forests**



AEON MALL Kurashiki

At AEON MALL Kurashiki, trees that have been planted and trees that had originally grown before the mall opened are nurturing a forest similar to natural forests in the region. Our survey in the forest has proven that about 40% of the plant species have something in common with the natural forest. This is a very high percentage compared to general green spaces in urban areas. Furthermore, a structure similar to that of the natural forest consisting of the tree layer, sub-tree layer, shrub layer and herb layer was identified in certain areas of the forest.

**Evergreen saplings avoid increasing alien plants!?**



THE OUTLETS HIROSHIMA

In green spaces after the land development work, many alien species usually grow in the grassland. However, at THE OUTLETS HIROSHIMA, we found that the dense planting of evergreen saplings modeled on natural forests in the region and the weeding work have controlled the invasion and increase of alien plants. Alien species account for 18.2% of the total 121 alien species identified on the site, which is a very low percentage for a developed site in the urban area.



## Plants found in "AEON Hometown Forests"



Kurashiki and Hiroshima (planting)

Machilus thunbergii

It is a tall, evergreen tree that can also be found in natural forests. Its fruits that ripen in summer are very popular with birds.



Kurashiki and Hiroshima (planting)

Castanopsis cuspidate

It is a tall, evergreen tree that can also be found in natural forests. It grows to a height of about 20 meters.



Kurashiki and Hiroshima (planting)

Bayberry

It is a tall, evergreen tree that can also be found in natural forests. The female plant bears sweet and sour fruits in early summer.



Kurashiki and Hiroshima (planting)

Ligustrum japonicum

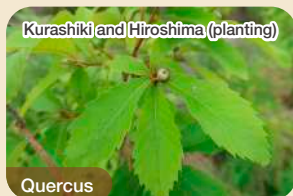
It is a tall, evergreen tree that can also be found in natural forests. It bears the fruits that birds eat in autumn.



Kurashiki and Hiroshima (planting)

Eurya japonica

It is an evergreen shrub that can also be found in natural forests. It bears many small fruits in autumn.



Kurashiki and Hiroshima (planting)

Quercus

It is a deciduous tall tree that grows in village-vicinity forests. It is planted in an undeveloped woodland area near a village at THE OUTLETS HIROSHIMA.



Kurashiki (preserving original trees)

Chinese hackberry

Leaves

It is a deciduous tall tree that can also be found in natural forests. Large trees that have originally grown before the mall opened are being preserved at AEON MALL Kurashiki.



Hiroshima (naturally-derived)

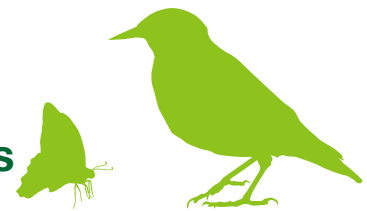
Violet

It is a native perennial plant that the larvae of Indian fritillary feed on. Several kinds of violets grow at THE OUTLETS HIROSHIMA.





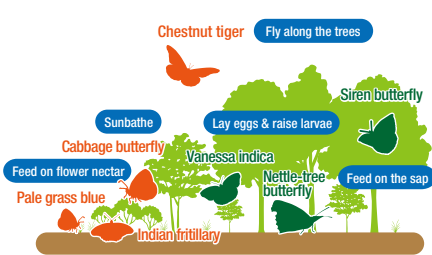
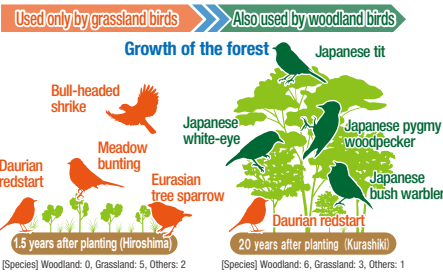
# What our survey has discovered about the forests (2) Birds and butterflies



**A variety of birds come along with the growth of the forest!**

**The diverse environment of the forest is a habitat for various butterflies!**

**The forest is connected to local nature through a green network!?**



In the forest where not much time has passed since the planting, no woodland birds among all 7 bird species were identified, but 5 species of grassland birds were identified. On the other hand, in the forest where about 20 years have passed since planting, 6 of the 10 total bird species identified were woodland birds. This indicates that immature forests are visited by grassland birds and mature forests are visited by woodland birds, and it can be said that the forest functions as a habitat for a variety of birds depending on the growth stage of the forest.

"AEON Hometown Forests" offer a variety of environments such as sunny and dark places, upper and lower layers of the forest, densely forested areas, and open spaces. In such different environments, we were able to see butterflies inhabiting the environment suitable for them, flying along the edges of the trees, sunbathing on the branches, and sucking nectar from the flowers on plants and trees. Forests play various roles in providing migration routes, feeding grounds, and breeding grounds for the butterflies living in the region.

You can see various birds and butterflies when you walk in "AEON Hometown Forests". These flying animals are thought to live not only in this forest but also come and go from nature areas in the region. There are also plants that let these animals carry seeds and pollen. In urban areas with a little greenery, the "AEON Hometown Forest" is imagined to be part of the green network that is connected to local nature.



## Birds and butterflies seen in "AEON Hometown Forests"



It is found in forests and wooded parks. White-eyes were flying to camphor trees and heron trees with ripe fruit (pictured) in autumn at AEON MALL Kurashiki.



It is a forest-dwelling species of woodpecker. Pygmy woodpeckers were seen looking for food in areas with large trees at AEON MALL Kurashiki.



It is a familiar bird living in villages, but the number of sparrows is on the decline in urban areas. Sparrows utilize bright areas of the forest as feeding and sheltering ground in "AEON Hometown Forests".



It is a migratory bird that spends the autumn and winter months in Japan. In "AEON Hometown Forests", daurian redstarts prefer forest edges and bright areas where trees are still small.



It is a species of hawk, similar in size to a pigeon or slightly larger than it. High hawks were flying above the forest of THE OUTLETS HIROSHIMA, looking for their prey.



It is found in forests and wooded parks. Its larvae feed on the leaves of Chinese hackberries. Nymphalid butterflies were found in a large Chinese hackberry at AEON MALL Kurashiki.



The name "Tengu" comes from the fact that the head of the butterfly is elongated like the nose of Tengu (long-nosed goblin). Many Tengu butterflies were seen in the slightly dark forest in autumn at AEON MALL Kurashiki.



It is a leopard-print butterfly living in grasslands. Larvae of the argyreus hyperbius feed on the leaves of violets. It uses grasses among trees at "AEON Hometown Forests".



## Let's observe AEON Hometown Forests!

By carrying out this survey on creatures, we were able to confirm that various animals and plants live in the forest and they play an important role as part of local ecosystem. And, we could observe that the forest changes over time and grows to exist uniquely with local nature.

Please come observe the "AEON Hometown Forest" when you visit the nearest AEON MALL to you. It would be great if you could feel the animals and plants inhabiting this unique forest. We would like to continue our efforts to create forests that are loved by everyone in the region.

