**H. gracillima** F. Maekawa 1936


 돌산비비추 = Dol-san-bi-bi-chu  
 히메이와ギボウシ = Hime Iwa Giboshi

**History and Nomenclature:** Hime Iwa Giboshi, the “small rock hosta,” is one of the smallest species extant and allopatric populations exist in the mountain valleys of Kochi Prefecture (高知県; Kōchi-ken), on the island of Shikoku. Fujita (1976) connected this taxon with Iwa Giboshi, *H. longipes*, as the variety *H. longipes* var. *gracillima*. His placement was based on grounds of minor, macro-morphological flower details but the typifying coloration of the perianth lobes (tepals) of *H. gracillima* is purple striped and they do not have a homogeneous color field as is present in all *H. longipes* variants. The type (in TI) was collected by Okamoto near Tosa and has late-blooming flowers with long, narrow tubes and a flaring perianth so is maintained as a member of the late-blooming section *Tardanthea* following Maekawa (1940). The species epithet comes from gracilis = gracefully slender, alluding to the very long and slender flowers with gracefully recurving tepals (lobes). This taxon was obtained by Craig in Japan and sent to Davidson in 1964, who grew it as No. 64 (Davidson; 1990). At one time it was *H. ‘Rock Princess’, which is an incor-
rect translation of Hime Iwa (姫岩), meaning “small rock.” Hime as a noun means princess and the Japanese Kanji 姫 means “princess” or “small.” Several other taxa were also called H. ‘Rock Princess’ among them H. venusta and H. nakaiana so this name should not be used as it is confusing. Several hybridized forms of H. gracillima are in the trade of which some may be interspecific hybrids with leaf length/width ratios from 2:1 to 3:1. In Japan this taxon is frequently and incorrectly called H. venusta because some of its forms have leaves similar to the latter but the flowering scape of H. gracillima is smooth while that of H. venusta has ridges. In Korea this species is named for Dolsan Island on the South Coast of Korea, namely 돌산비비추 = Dolsan-bi-bi-chu, which means “Dolsan (island) Hosta.” H. gracillima (or as

H. longipes var. gracillima) is not endemic in Korea according to M.G. Chung (pers. comm. 1989, 1990). A problem exists with the association of H. longipes with H. gracillima. N. Fujita in 1976 included H. gracillima as a variety under H. longipes, giving it new status. He mentions the dark veins on the inside of the perianth. However, pictures in a database published by Miyagi University showing H. longipes var. gracillima show the typical inside tepal coloration of H. longipes with no distinct lines. To compare, I have included illustrations of each taxon’s flower details. I do not agree with the validity of this varietal rank for H. gracillima on morphometric grounds.

 striped and narrow tepals of H. gracillima evenly colored and wider tepals of H. longipes var. gracillima. (Miyagi U. Photo) The relationship of these with the Korean populations on Dolsan is not known.
The original source for the North American cultivated specimens was the late Gus F. Krossa, then living at Livonia, Michigan. Krossa (1966) made it clear he considered himself a plant collector possessed of much enthusiasm but little botanical knowledge. He was principally interested in species and botanical varieties and to that end corresponded with Japanese universities, including the University of Osaka. He also knew a

number of private Japanese hosta collectors so received Hosta material from several Japanese sources starting in 1950. Sometimes in the late 1950s he also obtained species from J. L. Creech and R. W. Lighty at the United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Station. It is clear from Krossa’s correspondence that *H. gracillima* came from Osaka University. Another source was R. Davidson, who detailed his activities in a personal communication to me (Davidson, 1970; 1990) and cleared up several issues. His trips to Japan and collecting activities took place in 1969/70. After his return in 1970 he received many plants from Jack Craig. Some of the plants attributed by some authors to Davidson actually originated (labeled with Japanese names) with Craig, including Hime Iwa Giboshi (*H. gracillima* = ヒメイワギボウシ) in 1946. From this it can be

*H. gracillima* in flower and bud

Gunma-ken Botanic Garden 植物園 群馬県

(Gunma U. Voucher)

Court.: © S. Aoki 2004.08.18

*H. gracillima* in Bud

Hosta Hill R.G.

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concluded that there were at least two original sources for the North American clones. Both are morphologically identical and conform to the type.

**Habitat and Biology:**
The native populations of *H. gracillima* are limited to locations in Kōchi Prefecture located on the south coast of Shikoku. Korean sources (KPNI) mention this species as a varietas, i.e. *H. longipes* var. *gracillima* to be endemic Dolsan Island on the South Coast of Korea. M.G. Chung (1985, 1987, 1989, 1990) conducted a comprehensive survey of the Korean taxa and found no evidence of *H. gracillima* (or *H. longipes* var. *gracillima*) being endemic on Dolsan. Both Krossa and Craig imported their specimens of *H. gracillima* from cultivated type populations in Japan in the late 1950s and early 1960s and these specimens are representative of the type. For the purpose of this study this species discussed here with respect only to the late-blooming populations described by Maekawa from Tosa on Shikoku and excluding early-blooming variants included by Fujita as *H. longipes* var. *gracillima*.

*H. longipes* var. *gracillima* 
Leaves and flower in situ on moss-covered rocks
(Court.: ©Tansyio Uri)
2003.09.05
Loc. cit.: 高知県幡多郡
Kōchi-ken, Hata-gun
**H. gracillima in Cultivation:**

H. gracillima is popular in gardens. Miniature hostas are in vogue and not only the “plain green” species but a number of variegated sports and hybrids of H. gracillima are seen in gardens. It must also be mentioned that various hybridized forms are passed on for the species. These cultivated specimens look very much like the species and some have been named. One of these is H. ‘Little Wiggler’ (P. & J. Ruh, 2005). Another variant is H. ‘Sugar Plum Fairy’ (Briggs Nursery 1987). In Germany a cultivar named H. ‘Japan Boy’ is very similar and may also be a H. gracillima derivation. There are several others. A variegated form closely resembling the species is in North America under the name Shirofukurin Ko Mame Gibōshi, H. ‘Shirofukurin Ko Mame’, which see, and this form may be identical to H. gracillima ‘Shirofukurin’. This taxon as well as its cultivar forms are excellent in the rock or miniature garden and is used in Japan for pot culture.

**H. gracillima**

typical species leaves
Hosta Hill R.G.
© W.G. Schmid 1987.06.22

**H. (gracillima)**

‘Little Wiggler’
P. & J. Ruh (2005)
© J. Schwarz/HL
**Plant Morphology:** Plant size 20–24 cm dia., 7.5–10 cm high (5–7 by 0.75 in.). Petiole 3–5 by 0.2 cm wide (1.2–2 by 0.10 in. wide), semi-erect, green. Leaf 2.5–6 by 1.1–2 cm (1–2.5 by 0.50–0.75 in.), Leaves semi-erect, ovate-lanceolate, acuminate tip, undulate, wavy in the margin, rigid, smooth, glossy green above, glossy lighter green below, contracted at the base. Venation 2–3, sunken above, smooth, below. Scape 20–25 cm (8–10 in.), erect, but leaning, green, purplish red dotted at base. Fertile bracts short, navicular, awl-shaped, spreading, green, rigid, persisting after anthesis. Raceme short, few flowers. Flowers 2.5–3.5 cm long, 2.5 cm broad (1–1.5 by 1 in.), long narrow tube, perianth suddenly broadly funnel-shaped, in the central part very slightly dilated bell-shaped, lobes spreading rapidly, recurving, wide open, blunt, ▲ Type C lobes, lavender outside, purple-striped inside, short pedicels, slightly projecting stamen. Anthers purple. September. Fertile.

**Karyotype-Chromosomes:** Sporophytic Count = 60; 12 large, 48 small; (2n).

**Pollen:** (Pollen shape after Erdtman, 1966): *H. gracillima* was not included by M.G. Chung and S.B. Jones (1989). It can be concluded that the palynology of this species is similar to the closely related *H. tardiva*. Which has Subtype RG(IIA) (rugulate granulate) and OS (oblate-spheroidal); size in the range of P 75.1 ± 2.7 × E 66.7 ± 2.2. This is a preliminary evaluation and exact data must await future analysis.

**Genome Size:** DNA content (2C) in pg (10^{-12} gram) = 22.1 ± 0.31. (Zonneveld, B.J.M. and F. Van Iren. 2001.

**DNA Banding:** Recent RAPD analysis (Sauve, R.J., S. Zhou, Y. Yu, and W.G. Schmid. 2005), did not include *H. gracillima*. However the banding patterns of 4 related species accessions were compared in the 2002/2005 studies and it was concluded that similar results can be obtained for *H. gracillima*. This is a preliminary evaluation and exact data must await future RAPD analysis.
**Taxonomic Type and Synonymy:**

*H. gracillima* Maekawa in Nakai. 
*Iconogr. Plant. Asiae Orient.*, 1:72 1936 (with respect only to the late-blooming populations described by Maekawa on Shikoku and excluding early-blooming variants included by Fujita). 
Type: In TI; coll. M. Okamoto, Tosa Prefecture, Shikoku, Japan. Hab.: Kochi-ken, Shikoku.

**Botanical Synonyms:**


**Japanese Language Synonyms:**

ヒメイワギボウシ = Hime Iwa Giboshi (Okamoto in Kikuchi 1934)

**Korean Language Synonyms:**

돌산비비추 = Dol-san-bi-bi-chu

**German Language Synonyms:**

Kleine Felsenfunkie

**Horticultural Synonyms:**

*H. gracilliana* hort. incorrect name  
*H. (gracillima)* ‘Japan Boy’ (not the “Japan Boy” registered as *H. ‘Montreal’)  
*H. (gracillima)* ‘Little Wiggler’  
*H. (gracillima)* ‘Sugar Plum Fairy’  
*H. (gracillima)* ‘Saizaki’ (Saizaki Hime Iwa Giboshi = 采咲きヒメイワギボウシ) is a mutant form with deformed lobes and petaloid stamens treasured by the Japanese. Although found in the wild it is non-perpetuating so a cultivar.

Rock Princess 
Small Rock Hosta

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*H. gracillima*

Typical leaf mound 
Hosta Hill R.G. 
© W.G. Schmid 
1985.06.17
H. gracillima
In full bloom
© W.G. Schmid
1985.09.09
Hosta Hill R.G.

H. gracillima (ヒメイワギボウシ = 姫岩擬宝珠)
Typical leaf mound
Hosta Hill R.G. © W.G. Schmid 1985.07.01
H. ‘Saizaki Hime Iwa’ = 采咲きヒメイワギボウシ
Photo © K. Butner/HL

H. ‘Saizaki Hime Iwa’ ▲▲▲
© zdap/Hamanako Gibōshi
◄◄◄ H. gracillima
Kleine Felsenfunkie
Botanischer Garten der Universität Karlsruhe, Germany
© M/ Hassler
H. gracillima (typical leaf mound) (ヒメイワギボウシ = 姫岩擬宝珠)

For color comparison: yellow and green from Kodak and Fuji slide film packages for size determination: the label is exactly 1 by 3 inches (2.5 by 7.6 cm) at Hosta Hill R.G. © W.G. Schmid 1985.06.21

Note that there is variation in leaf sizes, particularly in leaf length. This specimen was obtained by G. Krossa from Osaka U. via J. L. Creech and R. W. Lighty (United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Station)
**Hosta gracillima**

In full bloom
Botanischer Garten
München (Munich),
Germany
© W.G. Schmid
1984.08.22

**Hosta gracillima**

Flower Buds
Hosta Hill R.G.
Photo W.G. Schmid 1985.08.29

**Hosta longipes var. gracillima**

Courtesy © Yamamoto
Plant DB Miyagi University

2010-05-20
**Horticultural Progeny:**

A number of *H. gracillima* derivatives are known, some named and some not. The meaning of derivative is that the species is directly involved and the derivative is a sport or a selfed seedling. Some of these look almost like the species and in case of careful and protected selfing, it may in fact be the species. The following cultivars are registered:

**Cultivars with *H. gracillima* ♀ as a pod parent:**

*H. ‘Little Wiggler’ = ♀ *H. gracillima* × ♂ (unknown) by P. & J. Ruh 2005 (This may be a selfed offspring)*

*H. ‘Purple Charmer’ = ♀ *H. gracillima* × ♂ *H. ‘Ogon Koba’* by P. Ruh 1993

*H. ‘Sugar Plum Fairy’ = ♀ *H. gracillima* × ♂ (unknown) by Briggs Nursery (This may be a selfed offspring)*

**Cultivars with *H. gracillima* ♂ as a pollen parent:**

*H. ‘Medusa’ = ♀ *H. ‘Neat Splash’ × ♂ *H. gracillima* by R. Herold 1993*
This cultivar was once called *H. gracillima variegata* hort. or *H. gracillima* ‘Variegated’ hort., both are invalid and incorrect per the ICNCP. The incorrect names have been replaced by the cultivar name *H. ‘Vera Verde’*. This cultivar’s connection with *H. gracillima* has been suggested, but has not been verified.

In Japan variegated cultivars connected with *H. gracillima*:

Note: Recent research has shown that *H. gracillima* and *H. longipes* var. *gracillima* are of different origin in Japan and show differentiated morphometric values. In particular, the flower tepals have stripes in the former and a single color field in the latter (as seen in *H. longipes*).

The variegated cultivars described here are sports of *H. gracillima* and do not originate with *H. longipes* var. *gracillima*: Shirofukurin Hime Iwa Giboshi = 白覆輪ヒメイワギボウシ and Shirofukurin Ko Mame Giboshi = 白覆輪コマメギボウシ are similar and both are the white-margined form of *H. gracillima*. The horticultural name *H. gracillima* ‘Shirofukurin’ hort. should not be used and the correct name is *H. ‘Shirofukurin Hime Iwa’*. A problem with this cultivar is that its margin is yellow in spring and turns white later, so it is frequently called *H. ‘Kifukurin Ko Mame’*. The latter name seem to be most frequently used and is based on the Japanese Kifukurin Ko Mame Giboshi = 黄覆輪コマメギボウシ that translates to “pea-sized hosta with yellow margin.”
Variegated sport with thin yellow turning to white margin, mostly called *H. ‘Kifukurin Ko Mame’* formerly called *H. gracillima ‘Variegata’* (or ‘Variegated’), or *H. gracillima ‘Shirofukurin’*. These latter names are now invalid and the name *H. ‘Kifukurin Ko Mame’* is recommended.

H/L Photos clockwise: D. Nakon, Bob Axmear, W. Putz

References:
Davidson, R., 1990. Letter dated January 1990 sent to Dr. R. C. Olson (private communication).
Maekawa, F., 1936. Hosta gracillima. See Nakai, T., 1936
Maekawa, F. 1940. The genus Hosta. J. of the Faculty of Science, Imperial University Tokyo, Section 3 Botany, Vol. 5:317–425.
Okamoto, S., in Kikuchi, M., 1934.
H. ‘Kifukurin Ko Mame’
(See Page 13 for Explanation of Names on Label)
At Hosta Hill R.G. © W.G. Schmid, August 1994.09.10

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