

# Regional characteristics of a kleingarten in Saku City, Nagano Prefecture

Takumi ISONO\*

## Abstract

This study clarifies the development conditions and characteristics of the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki, while focusing on analyzing the relationship between the kleingarten and its surroundings as well as the both the management form and users' behaviors. The key factors for a successful kleingarten such as Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki are as follows: (1) location of the kleingarten, (2) availability of rich opportunities for interaction between users and local residents, and (3) a variety of tourist attractions in the surrounding areas. In addition, this study reveals that users also give emphasis to the surrounding environment as well as to the kleingarten itself. Because some users regard the kleingarten as a second home, they are predisposed to spending their own time not only farming but also enjoying the area on holidays. In terms of the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki, users seem to evaluate the "placeness" with multiple elements of locational conditions, exchange activities, and the tourist attraction-rich surroundings.

**Key words:** kleingarten, urban and rural exchange, tourism, tourist resource, Nagano Prefecture

## 1. Introduction

The recent increase of fallow farmlands and abandoned cultivated lands has become a serious problem in the mountainous regions of Japan (Higuchi, 1999). In response, some rural areas have attempted to divert fallow farmlands into allotment gardens to promote regional development through urban and rural exchange (Jeong, 1995). These allotment gardens located in mountainous regions allow many urban residents to enjoy not only farming but also recreation. Some urban residents have more than the usual interest in kleingarten with a lodge beside a garden as a place to experience both dwelling place and farming after retirement. This study adopts the definition provided by Nagai and Hoshi (2007) and Obara (2010), who define kleingarten as an allotment garden with a laube in which to stay overnight as well as a field of a covenanted farmland.

Rural tourism and urban and rural exchange have been increasingly discussed during the recent post-productivism years. In this context, kleingarten has been subject to studies of their actual condition, economic effects, and strate-

gic direction of regional development through urban and rural exchange (Furuya and Makiyama, 2004; Inoue and Makiyama, 2009; Makiyama and Inoue, 2011; Makiyama *et al.* 2010; Nagai and Hoshi, 2007; Tateyama *et al.* 2003). However, there are few studies that discuss the actual situation of kleingarten in terms of both management's and users' perspectives although Nagai and Hoshi (2007) mentions the significance. Most studies consider only one of these perspectives; however, this study clarifies the development conditions and characteristics of a kleingarten in Nagano Prefecture, Japan, while focusing on the analysis of both the management form and users' behaviors. In addition, this study also gives considerable attention to the relationship between the kleingarten and its surroundings. Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki, located in Saku City, Nagano Prefecture, was selected for focus this study.

First, this study explains the recent trend of kleingarten in Japan by analyzing past studies and materials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF). Second, the actual situation of the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki is explained, with a focus on both management form and users' behaviors, based on the author's interview with a representative from the Mochizuki Branch of Saku City Office, which serves as the administrative body of the kleingarten, as well as the residential organizations and kleingarten users. This interview took place October 20-26, 2013. Finally, this study discusses the characteristics of the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki in Nagano Prefecture.

## 2. Recent trend of kleingarten in Japan and Nagano Prefecture

Allotment gardens can serve a variety of roles, such as

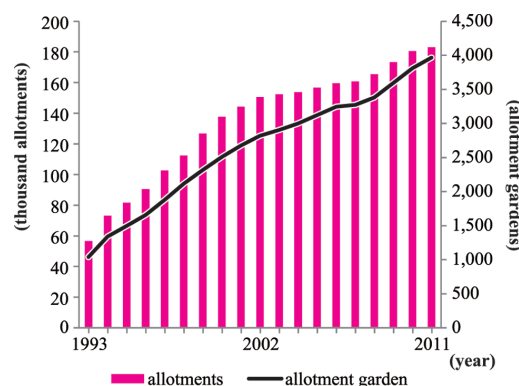


Fig. 1 Number of allotment gardens in Japan (1993-2011)  
(Source: MAFF)

\* Graduate Student, University of Tsukuba, JSPS Research Fellow

the cultivation of subsistence crops or flowers and ornamental plants, a source of recreation for urban residents, a place of rejuvenation for elderly people, and a place of experiential learning for students (Obara, 2010). In Japan, allotment gardens gradually spread with urbanization and the increasing appearance of fallow lands after the 1960s, however, the number of allotment gardens has been increasing rapidly since the establishment *the Act on Special Provision of the Farmland* (特定農地貸付法) in 1989 and *the Act on Promotion of Development of Community Farms*

(市民農園整備促進法) in 1990, which required farmers to lease farmland from non-farmers as well as other farmers (Fig. 1) – as well as the establishment of *the Act on Promotion of Development of Infrastructures for Leisure Stay in Rural Area* (農山漁村滞在型余暇活動基盤整備法) in 1995 and *the Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas Basic Act* (食料・農業・農村基本法) in 1999. In addition, two acts prior to 1989 also promote leisure activities within rural areas.

Fig. 2 shows the spatial distribution of allotment gar-

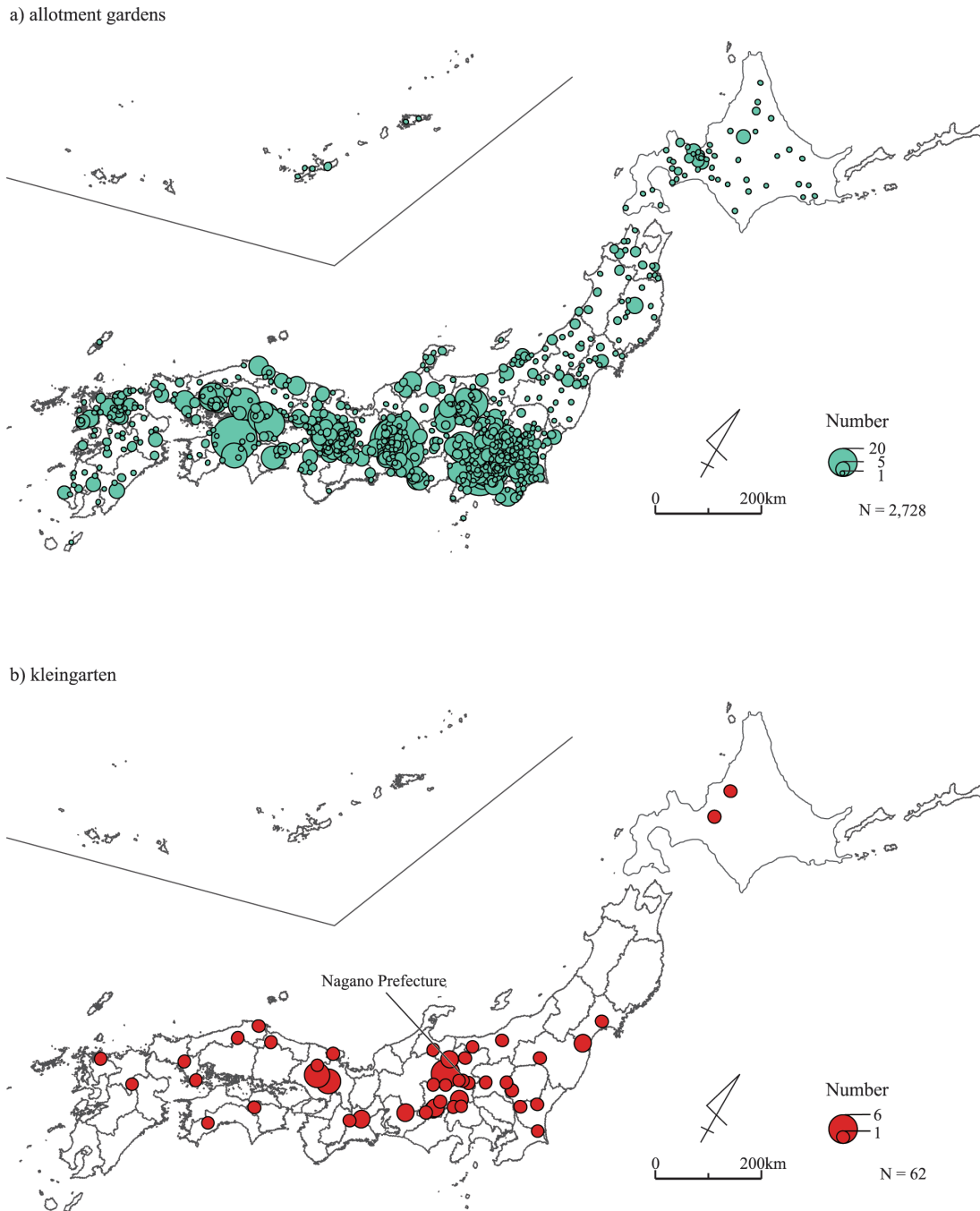


Fig. 2 Distribution of allotment gardens and kleingarten in Japan (2012)(Source: MAFF)

dens and kleingarten in Japan. Allotment gardens tend to be concentrated in the three major metropolitan areas (Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya) and local major cities that have good accessibility from urban residential areas (Fig. 2-a). On the other hand, kleingarten are primarily located in the mountainous areas of Nagano, Yamagashi, and Hyogo prefectures (Fig. 2-b). According to the MAFF, Nagano Prefecture has the largest number of kleingarten in Japan. Figure 3 shows the distribution of the 19 kleingarten in Nagano Prefecture, which was total number of kleingarten there in 2012 (Fig. 3). Kleingarten were first established in the central part of Nagano Prefecture before gradually developing in the northern, southern, and eastern parts in the 2000s. Opening the Joshin-Etsu Expressway in the in the eastern part of Nagano enabled good traffic conditions from the Tokyo Metropolitan Area, especially North Kanto, and has had a significant impact on the establishment of kleingarten.

### 3. Actual situation of the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki

#### 3.1. Overview of Saku City and the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki

The Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki was established in 2009 and is located in Mochizuki Area, Saku City, in the most eastern part of Nagano Prefecture (Fig.4). It takes 70 minutes by bullet train and two hours by expressway from the Central Area of Tokyo via the Joshin-Etsu Expressway

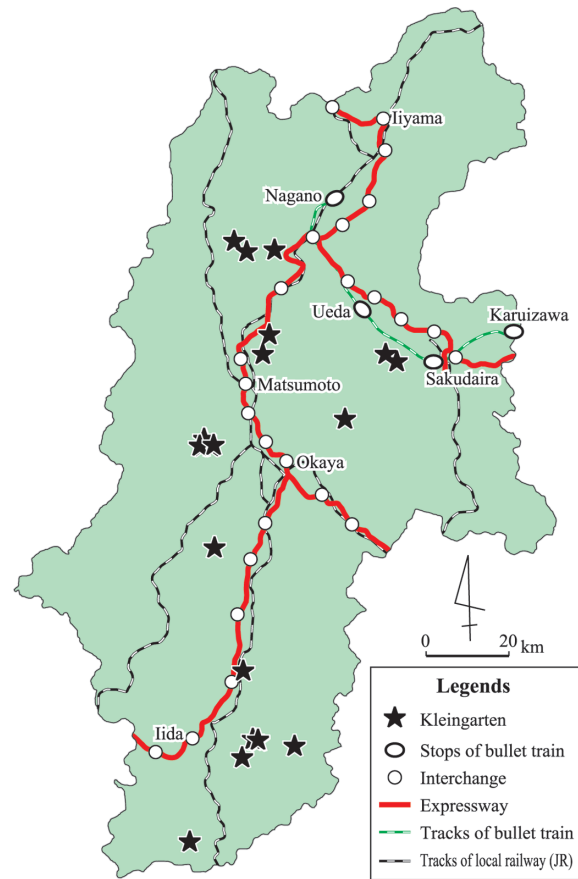


Fig. 3 Distribution of kleingarten in Nagano Prefecture (2012) (Source: MAFF)

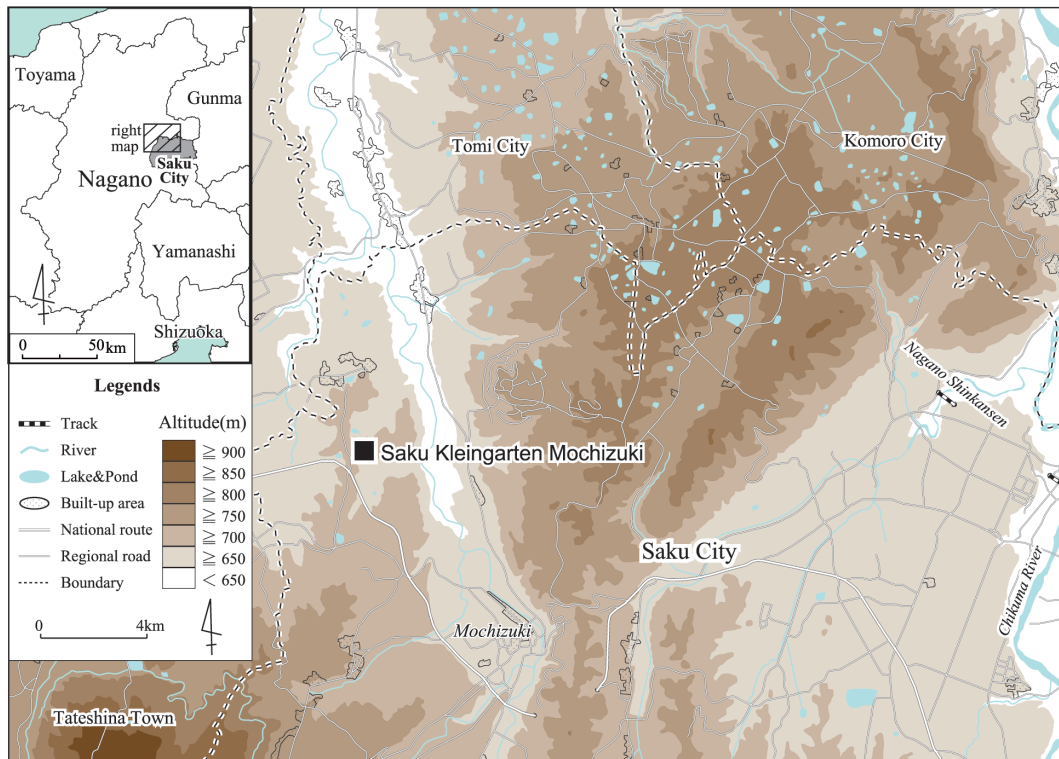


Fig. 4 Study area

and the Sakudaira Station of Hokuriku Shinkansen. Saku City possesses an abundant natural environment as it is surrounded by Joshin'etsu-kogen National Park, Yatsugatake-Chushin Kogen Quasi-National Park and Myogi-Arafune-Saku Quasi-National Park, with the Chikuma River running north and south in the center of the city. Saku City was merged with Usuda Town, Asashina Town and Mochizuki Town in 2005. According to the Saku City Hall, Saku City has as many as 100,765 inhabitants, of which 9,845 are lived in the Mochizuki Area in 2011.

The Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki has 20 garden sections (19 contained and one barrier-free) and a total area of 9,986 square meters (Figs. 5, 6). Each section costs an annual fee of 380,000 yen and users can stay there for a maximum of five years. There are huts to store farm equipment, a shared farm (300 square meters), recreational path (456 meters), as well as farms with laube to stay overnight in the kleingarten. In addition, the *Kannonmine Development Center* (観音峰活性化センター), which is adjacent to the kleingarten, serves as community center for not only kleingarten users but also other local residents and functions as the administration office and farmers' market.

### 3.2. Background and management form of the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki

The Mochizuki Branch of Saku City Office undertook the improvement of a kleingarten as a civic business in 2007 to promote regional development and immigration through practicing urban and rural exchange. A total investment of 256 million yen covered the cost of land formation, improvement of the recreational path, and construction of the septic tank, sewage pipe line, water supply works and building operations by the middle of 2008. After that, the Mochizuki Branch of Saku City Office sought primary period users, with a total of 270 groups applying



Fig. 5 Overview of the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki (2013)

This figure shows some farms with laube to stay overnight in the kleingarten. Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki has 20 garden sections.

for the 20 garden sections. A drawing was held in Saku City at the end of 2008 to choose the 20 groups winners, of which seven were from Tokyo, five were from Saitama, four were from Kanagawa, two were from Chiba, and one each were from Niigata and Kyoto. As of March 2013, 211 groups were on a waitlist to utilize the kleingarten after the present users leave. Applicant eligibility requirements are as follows: taking part in the group works, visiting the kleingarten at least twice between April to October to manage users' own farmland, and participating in the opportunities for interaction between users and local residents.

The Mochizuki Branch of Saku City Office is both the operating body and the management body of the kleingarten since its opening in 2009. It first employed a temporary worker who was a farmer in Mochizuki Area as an administrator of the kleingarten in 2009, but has entrusted the maintenance and management of the kleingarten to a "senior manpower center (佐久シルバー人材センター)" in Saku City since 2013. Currently, three senior farmers from Mochizuki Area are engaged in the administration of the kleingarten in rotation. One of their primary roles is to provide agricultural support to the users, as most users do not have a great deal of farming experience. These users tend to ask the administrative farmers how to use farm equipment for instruction on cultivation methods.

### 3.3. The roles of resident organizations for urban and rural exchange

The Mochizuki Branch of Saku City Office organizes some communication opportunities for exchange between local residents and users between April and November every year (Table 1). These activities are divided into two groups: desired participation and full participation. Desired participation activities include agricultural advisory, local

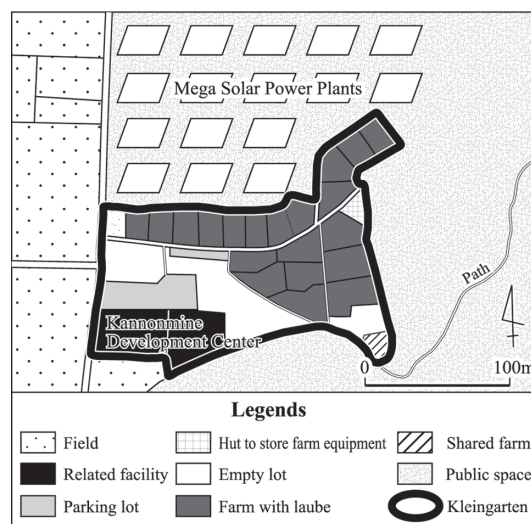


Fig. 6 Land use of the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki and its surroundings (2013) (Source: Field survey)



Table 1. Exchange activities in the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki (2013) (Source: Interview)

Month	Section of the exchange activities		A.S.K.M.
	Desired participation	Full participation	
4	■Agricultural Advisory		○
5	■Agricultural Advisory		
6	■Agricultural Advisory	■Group Work (Mowing and Cleanup)	○
7		■Cool evening breeze party with users and R.O.	○
8	■Sakaki Festival		
9		■Group Work (Mowing and Cleanup)	○
10			
11	■Local Horse Race Games		

\*A.S.K.M. = The Association of the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki

Source: Interviews.

festivals such as *the Sakaki Festival* (榊祭り), and local horse racing games. The Sakaki Festival is one of the most famous traditional festivals in Nagano Prefecture and the kleingarten persuades its users into joining each year. Full participation activities refer to the group work such as mowing and cleanup of common spaces, and all users must take part in them. *The cool evening breeze party* (夕涼み会) held every July, is also a full participation event, though a variety of other local people also take part in it. The users regard this event as an important opportunity to interact with local residents, so most users participate in the party in a positive manner.

As Makiyama *et al.* (2010) points out, resident organizations that consist of local people are helpful in promoting urban and rural exchange in kleingarten. *The Association for the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki* (佐久クラインガルテン望月協力会), a resident organization established in conjunction with the opening of the kleingarten, cooperates with the Mochizuki Branch of Saku City Office to organize and manage the exchange activities. The members of the association consist of the agricultural committee in Saku City (five persons), the commerce and industry associations in Mochizuki Area (two persons), the tourism association in Mochizuki Area (one person), local self-governing bodies (five persons), the agricultural extension center (one person), the agricultural cooperative (one person), former users of kleingarten (five persons), and local organizations (seven persons). Most of these members live in Mochizuki Area and are engaged in farming. In addition, most assist in house-hunting endeavors for users who wish to immigrate to Mochizuki Area, engage in agricultural advisory, and participate in the exchange events. Some former users of the kleingarten purchased new houses and immigrated to Mochizuki Area. These members only take part in exchange activities but do not serve in the

Association for the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki because they consider the users as the principal managers of the area. On the other hand, the exchange between users and local residents who got to know each other through “the cool evening breeze party” or agricultural advisory activities resulted in two resident organizations— *Mochizuki Youth Outdoor Education Center* (望月少年自然の家) and *Komagata Famers Market Product Division* (こまがた直売所加工部)—which are treated as examples of the actual situation of interaction between users and local people.

Mochizuki Youth Outdoor Education Center is located in Mochizuki Area and consists of a facility for outdoor activities as well as camp schools for youth. The center’s president belongs to the Association for the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki, so he tries to participate in the exchange activities as much as possible. If he is unavailable, other staffs step up to participate. He regards the exchange activities as “a place to meet together” and believes they are an important way to cultivating close relationships between users and local people. As a result, five or six users visit the center annually and enjoy a variety of recreational activities such as canoeing and trail walking. Most are repeat visitors.

The Komagata Famers Market is also located in Mochizuki Area and sells local food such as croquette made from white clay potatoes and cookies that contain buckwheat flour. These products are sold at the Kannonmine Development Center and some kleingarten users buy them. The Komagata Famers Market Product Division is mainly comprised of females. This business trip service works within limited terms, especially on weekends, as many users visit the famers’ market directly and not only buy products but also communicate with its members. Members of Komagata Famers Market Product Division are passionate about joining the exchange activities, with most attending almost every time.

### 3.4. Users’ behaviors

Table 2 shows the attributes of the users of the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki in 2013. All users come from Kanto Region, primarily Saitama and Kanagawa prefectures. In regard to registration, users are divided into two types: one that has continuously utilized kleingarten since 2009 and one that just started using it in 2013. Some users consider immigrating to Mochizuki Area after finishing their usage period. There are large differences in the length of stay, as some stay almost every day at the kleingarten while others visit just two or three times per month, generally on the weekends. However, most users tend to stay in the kleingarten for more than 10 days during long vacations, especially the summer season. The elevation of Mochizuki

Table 2. Attribution of the users of the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki (2013) (Source: Interview) (Source: Interview)

NO	Age	Origin (Pref.)	Registration	Gender	Length of stay (days)	
					Ave.	Summer
A	60	Saitama	2013	■	30~	30~
B	30	Saitama	2013	■□	~10	~15
C	60	Saitama	2013	■	~10	~15
D	50	Saitama	2009	■	~5	~10
E	60	Saitama	2011	■□	10	~20
F	50	Saitama	2012	■□	~10	~15
G	60	Saitama	2013	□	30~	30~
H	60	Saitama	2011	■□	15	15
I	60	Saitama	2013	■	10	~20
J	40	Kanagawa	2009	■□	~10	~15
K	60	Kanagawa	2012	■□	~10	~15
L	70	Kanagawa	2011	■□	~10	~15
M	60	Kanagawa	2009	■	~5	~10
N	60	Kanagawa	2010	■	30~	30~
O	50	Tokyo	2013	■	~5	~5
P	60	Tokyo	2009	■□	20	~20
Q	50	Tokyo	2009	■□	25~	25~
R	60	Gunma	2012	■□	~5	~5
S	70	Ibaraki	2013	■□	~5	~5
T	60	Chiba	2013	■□	15	~20

■: Male □: Female

\*Age shows that of the head of 'Gender'.

Source: Interviews.

Area is about 700 meters, making it much cooler than Tokyo Metropolitan Area. To examine the relationship between the kleingarten and its surroundings, select users' (A, G, and N) behaviors are discussed in detail in the next section. These users are chosen because they stay at the kleingarten at almost any time so it enables a deepening of understanding of the users' general behaviors.

#### 3.4.1. User A

User A is a male, about 60 years old, who lives in Saitama Prefecture. He stays at the kleingarten almost every day and brings his family from Saitama to stay there during summer vacation. He applied for a section of the garden in 2009 but was only able to start using the garden in July 2013, after being on the waitlist. The reason why he chose the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki and did not apply to other kleingarten was its natural environment, regional landscape, and the accessibility from his hometown. He participates in the group works and the "cool evening breeze party" but does not take part in the Sakaki Festival. He frequently communicates with other users and sometimes goes for walks with them around the kleingarten as well as eats with them and takes trips to the eastern part of Nagano Prefecture.

The behavioral pattern of user A is as follows. He is engaged in agricultural work in the morning, with half of his crops serving as self-consumption (i.e., self-support)

while the other half is delivered to his family and friends. He also exchanges his crops with other users' on occasion. Going shopping in the center of Mochizuki Area or Saku City urban district is one of his afternoon routines. He often enjoys leisure activities by himself or with other users outside of Mochizuki Area on weekends. He sometimes visits hot spring facilities in Saku City such as Kasuga Onsen or Fuse Onsen, or tourist attractions near the kleingarten such as Shirakaba Highland on holidays. When his family visits him for the long summer vacation, they go for outings within Nagano or other prefectures.

#### 3.4.2. User G

User G is a female, about 60 years old, who lives in Saitama Prefecture and started using the kleingarten in May 2013. She stays at the kleingarten almost every day and is only a person using by herself. She is interested in outside activities so initially she hoped to utilize a kleingarten in either Nagano or Yamanashi Prefecture, both of which have rich natural environments. She decided to apply to Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki after getting information from its website. She has no farming experience so she chooses to receive support from the administrative farmers and resident organizations.

The behavioral pattern of user G is as follows. She is engaged in agricultural work in the morning and goes to the supermarket or public library in Mochizuki Area on weekdays. In addition, she visits Asashina Area or Saku City urban district for pleasure. On holidays, she often takes part in events held in Saku City or the eastern part of Nagano Prefecture. She sometimes looks for volunteer activities via the internet or regional magazines and visits Ueda or Komoro City to participate in them. During the long summer vacation, her family from Saitama comes to the kleingarten. She believes it is important to spend time with family and enjoy some time off from working her section of the kleingarten. During their visit, she often takes her family to hot spring facilities in Saku City. Her range of activity is narrow and confined to Saku City or the eastern part of Nagano Prefecture.

#### 3.4.3. User N

User N is a male, about 60 years old, who lives in Kanagawa Prefecture. He started to use this kleingarten in 2010 and stays there most of the year, as he seldom returns to his hometown. His family visits the kleingarten once a month. He applied only to this kleingarten because he was attracted to the rich environment in Mochizuki Area. He attends almost all the exchange events and communicates with other users regularly; for example, he goes on gathering trips for edible wild plants near the mountains with other users.

The behavioral pattern of user N is as follows. He has been at the kleingarten for a long time so he has a strong relationship with members of the Association for the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki; for example, he has become a regular guest of the Mochizuki Youth Outdoor Education Center and developed a private friendship with its president. He spends most of his time within Mochizuki Area but goes outside on holidays or long vacations. He will leave the kleingarten soon and purchase a new house in Mochizuki Area. After moving, he expressed a desire to join the Association for the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki because he hopes to support new users, as is common among former users of the kleingarten.

#### 4. Discussion and conclusion

This study explains the development conditions and characteristics of the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki as viewed from the perspectives of both management and users, and the relationship between the kleingarten and its surroundings. The key factors for a successful kleingarten such as Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki are as follows: (1) location of the kleingarten, (2) availability of rich opportunities for interaction between users and local residents, and (3) a variety of tourist attractions in the surrounding areas.

This kleingarten has good geographical accessibility from the Tokyo Metropolitan Area. The traffic conditions from the Tokyo Metropolitan Area to Saku City were greatly improved by the opening of an expressway. Saku City is located at the entrance to the eastern part of Nagano Prefecture, and as such, the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki is easily accessible by car from the Tokyo Metropolitan Area. Therefore, the number of users from Kanto Region, especially Saitama and Kanagawa prefectures, is increasing, which will hopefully lead them to becoming long-term users.

The kleingarten also has rich opportunities for interaction between users and local residents. The kleingarten

holds many exchange events with local residents and most users take part in them. Some users wish to deepen their relationships with local residents immediately after participating in these events, which they consider “a place to meet together” for local residents and users. Thus, the opportunities to interact between users and local residents are a great motivator for users to visit the kleingarten frequently.

There is also an abundance of easily accessible tourist attractions around the kleingarten. Most users visit the kleingarten between April and October, but there are some users that stay during the winter season as well (Fig. 7). There are a variety of tourist attractions nearby, including hot springs village, golf course, ski area, and museum in the eastern part of Nagano Prefecture (Fig. 8). Some users consider the kleingarten to be a second home, so they come in winter to enjoy winter sports such as skiing as use it as their base for visiting other attractions in the area. Users’ behavioral spaces tend to be contained within nearby destinations of the kleingarten.

As Nagai and Hoshi (2007) mentioned, the traffic conditions from Tokyo Metropolitan Area and the opportunity to interact with local people play an important role in attracting kleingarten users. This study reveals that users also give emphasis to the surrounding environment as well as to the kleingarten itself. Because some users regard the kleingarten as a second home, they are predisposed to spending their time not only farming but also enjoying the area on holidays. In terms of the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki, users seem to evaluate the “placeness” with multiple elements of locational conditions, exchange activities, and the tourist attraction-rich surroundings.

The challenges for the future are as follows. Some users complain about a lack of hosted exchange activities in the kleingarten. It is necessary to improve and enhance this situation, but it may be difficult to implement due to a staffing shortage in the Mochizuki Branch of Saku City Office for community integration. Under the circumstances, the Mochizuki Branch of Saku City Office should cooperate with the Association of the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki more effectively, and the management of the kleingarten ought to gradually transfer from being administratively lead to private initiatives. On the other hand, it is also essential to practice urban and rural exchange within the balance of supply and demand. Saku City has good accessibility from Kanto Region, enabling it to hold urban and rural exchanges utilizing regional characteristics such as light snow and the abundance of tourist attractions.

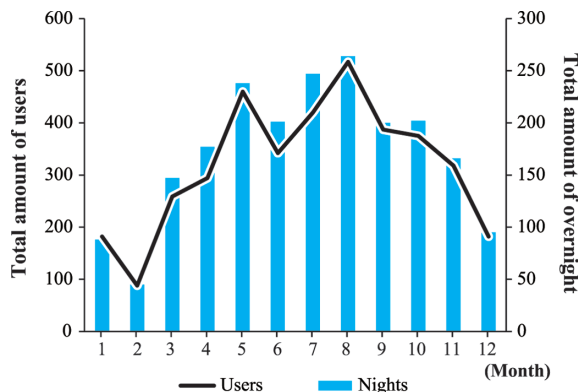


Fig. 7 Change in the number of users and length of their stay per month in the Saku Kleingarten Mochizuki (2012) (Source: Mochizuki Branch of Saku City Office)

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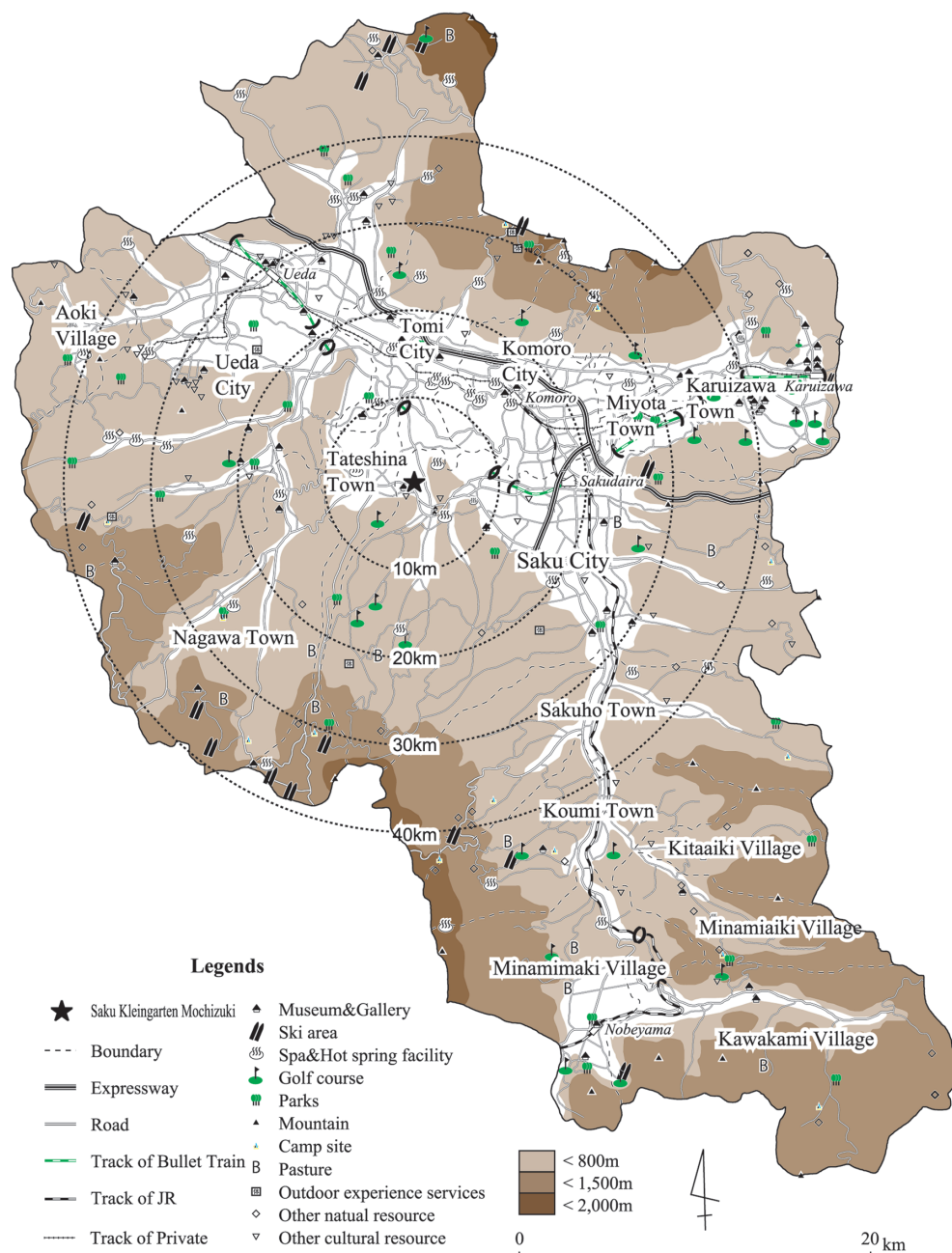


Fig. 8 Distribution of tourist attractions in the eastern part of Nagano Prefecture (Source: Mochizuki Branch of Saku City Office)

residential organizations and the users. A part of this paper was presented at the 9th Korea-China-Japan Joint Conference on Geography in Busan Metropolitan City, Korea in July 2014. This research is supported financially by the Research Fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Sciences (25 318).

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