

Japan: Seasonal Series

June Rainy Season

From early June until mid-July, Japan experiences the rainy season, called **tsuyu** (梅雨). It doesn't rain every day, but when the rains do come, they are often torrential downpours and it is also very humid during this time. Not all of Japan has the rainy season though and the northern island of Hokkaido escapes the wet weather. Also, the southern island of Okinawa is hit by the rains a month earlier than the rest of Japan.

Frogs (Kaeru かえる)

Frogs are a common sight in Japan during the rainy season. They can often be heard croaking by rivers and paddy fields and they thrive in the hot and humid conditions. Over the years, many haiku poems and songs have been written about the frogs that appear during this time of year, perhaps the most well-known one having been written by poet Matsuo Basho where he describes the sound that the frog makes as it leaps into a pond.



Rain dolls (Teru Teru Bouzu 照る照る坊主)



During the rainy season in Japan, many people make *teru teru bouzu* dolls as a means of willing the rain stop. It is said that if the smiling doll is hung from your doorway, the rain will cease and the sun will shine.

If there's an important day coming up (particularly in the farming calendar, or if there's a school outing) and people don't want it to rain, then they may also make a rain doll and hang it up. The smiling face is said to work wonders! The word *teru teru bouzu* literally translated means, 'shine, shine, and shaven head' and is a reference to the bald heads of Buddhist monks.