

Enjoying New Year's in Japan

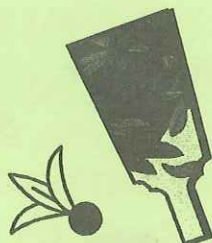
At the end of the year (“Nenmatsu” = the year end) and the beginning of the year (“Nenshi” = the new year) in Japan, people traditionally visit shrines and temples to give thanks for their well-being over the past year and also pray for good luck and happiness during the up-coming year. Many people also participate in special events at shrines and temples. Many of the new year's traditions and events stretch back to ancient times.

In this issue of *Purara*, we will introduce events at shrines and temples in Saitama city, traditional Japanese New Year's games, and some other fun ways to spend your time during the New Year's holidays. We hope that this information will help in making this special time of the year even more enjoyable for you, your family and your friends!

《Traditional New Year's Games》



Takoage (flying kites)
and *Koma-Mawashi*
(spinning tops)



Hanetsuki



Fukuwarai

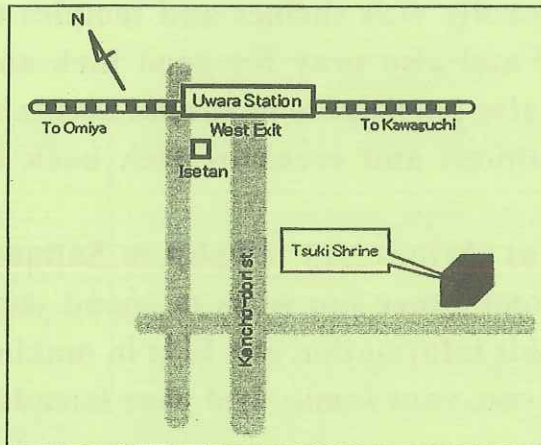
Things to Do at Year End

~Getting ready for the new year

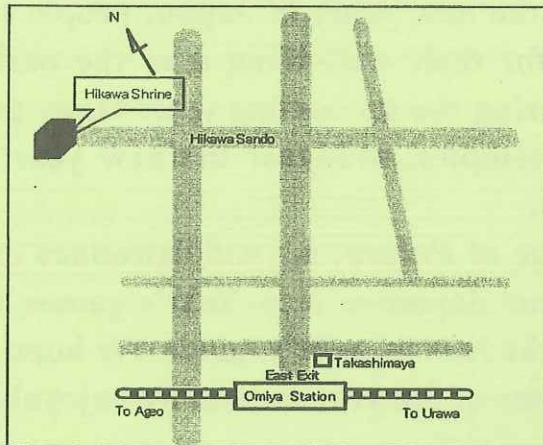
§ Torini-Ichi

At Torino-Ichi (open air markets), you can experience the festive atmosphere of the end of the year. A popular item sold at Torino-Ichi are *Kumade* (bamboo rakes). *Kumade* symbolize appreciation for the previous year's happiness and are said to bring good luck in the new year. People say that *Kumade* will "rake" in happiness and "sweep together" goodness in the new year, in particular with regard to business and family life. In Saitama city, the following two famous shrines hold Torino-Ichi.

- ◎ **Tsuki Shrine**
Ootoshi-no-Ichi
(Jyuninnchi machi)
December 12th



- ◎ **Hikawa Shrine**
Daitou Festival
(Toka machi)
December 10th



At Torino-Ichi, there are many small shops selling *Kumade* of various styles and designs. You can also enjoy eating and shopping at street stalls, and, if you stay into the evening, you can enjoy the change of atmosphere brought on by the night-time illumination.

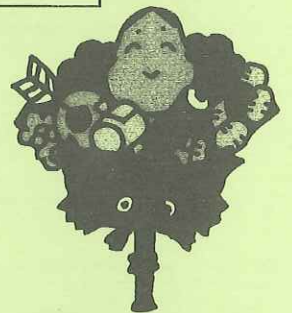
§ House Cleaning

Tidy up and clean off the dust of previous year.

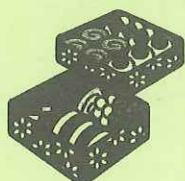
§ Preparing for the New Year

《Special Dishes》

《Decorations》



Kumade



Osechi



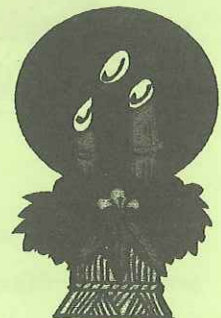
Mochi



Shimekazari



Kagamimochi



Kadomatsu

☞ Joya-no-Kane and Toshi-koshi-Soba

On the night of New Year's Eve (December 31st), people traditionally eat soba as they listen to *Joya-no Kane* (New Year's Eve Bells).

"Toshi-koshi Soba" (New Year's Eve buckwheat-flour noodles) is the custom of eating soba while wishing to live long and stay slender and supple, as those are the qualities of soba (the noodles are long and slender, yet supple).

Joya-no-Kane is to ring a temple bell 108 times or to listen to a temple bell as it is rung. 108 represents the number of different evil thoughts people can have in their minds. The bells are supposed to purify each of these thoughts with the sound of each ring. Many temples in the city start ringing bells before midnight on December 31st, and some temples allow visitors to ring their bells. So, stop by the temple nearest you, and enjoy the soothing sound of the Joya-no-Kane.

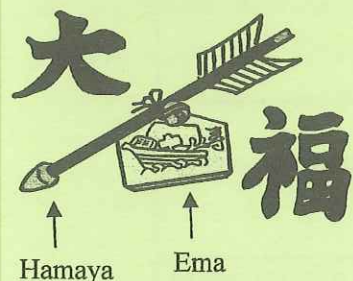


Things to Do on New Year's Day

☞ Hatsu-Moude (first visit of the year to a shrine or temple)

People visit shrines and temples to wish happiness in the new year.

People visiting shrines to often consult oracles, buy good-luck charms, and dedicate *Ema*, a votive picture of a horse. At temples, people often visit the cemetery to pay respects to their ancestors and wish for health and happiness for their families.



Most shrines and temples are open to the public on this day, so don't hesitate to visit and see what's happening!

☞ Hatsu-Ichi (the first market of the year)

During Hatsu-Moude, you can enjoy the many street stalls that line the entrance paths to shrines and comprise Hatsu-Ichi. Stalls offer good luck charms, food and drinks. At Hikawa Shrine (in Omiya Ward), we also have "Daruma Ichi" which offers "daruma" dolls for bringing luck. The Year End and the New Year's holidays are a great opportunity to take a closer look at and experience traditional Japanese culture, so come join in the festivities!



The 10th Annual

Japanese Speech Contest 2012

NOW Accepting Submissions!!

Theme: "Family"

~What you've seen and felt in Saitama~

Hi, foreign residents!
We invite you to present
your experiences in and thoughts
on Saitama!!



	Submission Information
Date/Time	February 4, 2112 (Saturday) 1:00 PM ~ 4:00 PM
Place	Urawa Community Center, Multipurpose Room (Comunale 10F)
Content	Japanese speech contest Theme: "Family" - Speech length: 5 minutes - Prizes will be awarded to winners.
Eligibility	Applicants must be: - Foreigners who reside, work, attend schools, or take Japanese language classes in Saitama city - Non-native speakers of Japanese
Application Materials	Send application form along with a copy of Japanese speech and a copy of your photo to SAGA via postal mail, FAX, or email attachment. Can be submitted by FAX, email attachment, or in person directly at SAGA front desk.
Deadline	December 5 th , 2011(Monday) Late submissions will NOT be accepted. ※In order to prevent overrepresentations of certain nationalities and repetitions of speech contents, SAGA reserve the right to select candidates based on such conditions. ※Successful participants will be notified within 10 days after the deadline.
Contact	The Saitama City Association for Global Awareness (SAGA) 9F of the COMUNALE Complex Higashi Takasago-cho 11-1, Urawa-ku, Saitama City Tel: 048-813-8500 Fax:048-887-1505 E-mail: mail@saga-saitama.or.jp