



A six-fold paper screen painted in ink and colour on a gold ground with autumn flowers and grasses

Japan 17th century Edo period

Dimensions: H. 53cm x W. 166.5cm (20³/₄" x 65¹/₂")

Not only the changing colours of autumn leaves but also flowers and grasses of the same season have been popular subjects in Japanese art, literature and poetry from an early period. In particular, the *aki no nanakusa* (seven grasses of autumn) theme dates to the eighth century poetry collection *Manyōshū* (Collection of Myriad Leaves) and has continued to be a favourite theme. As in the below two poems by an aristocrat and poet Yamanoue no Okura (660-733) included in the *Manyōshū*, the seven autumn grasses consist of *hagi* (bush clover), *susuki* (pampas grass), *kuzu* (arrowroot), *nadeshiko* (fringed pink), *onimaeshi* (golden lace), *fujibakama* (mistflower) and *kikyō* (bellflower).

Aki no no ni sakitaru hana o yubi orite kaki kazoueba nana kusa no hana.

Flowers blossoming
in autumn fields -
when I count them
on my fingers
then there are seven.

Hagi no hana obana kuzubana nadeshiko no hana ominaeshi mata fujibakama asagao no hana

The flowers of bush clover,
pampas grass, arrowroot,
fringed pink,
golden lace,
also, mistflower
and bellflower

n.b There are numerous old scratches and marks throughout the screens commensurate with age.



