

# VIVA! ひめじ

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Himeji Cultural and International Exchange Foundation  
– newsletter editing volunteers

## Preparing to Enter School and School Life

April is the beginning of the school year and here is an introduction of how the Japanese prepare for school life.

### Clothing for School Entrance Ceremony

Both children and their guardians should choose clothes that are not too casual, such as suits and dresses. For women, the preferable attire are clothes that cover their knees and elbows.

### Preparing to Enter School

Textbooks are free in elementary and junior high school.

#### Things to purchase before entering school:

Uniform, school bag, additional school bag, cap, indoor shoes, gym clothes and any additional supplies the school may request.

\*If you are unsure of what to purchase, make sure to ask the school beforehand.



#### Things to purchase after entering school:

Arithmetic set, painting set, calligraphy set, sewing kit, keyboard harmonica, recorder, swimsuit, etc.

#### ◆Other things to keep in mind during school

- Expenses such as school lunch will be collected during each month or semester. You will need a bank account of a bank that the school uses.
- There is no school lunch on Sports Day or field trips, so you will need to pack your own lunch. School event information will be written in the school newsletter or on their website.
- Please write your name on all of your child’s belongings (including each pencil). Name stickers will be quite useful.
- Students clean the classrooms by themselves so they will need a cleaning cloth known as a *Zokin*.
- If you bring your water bottle, please only fill it with water or tea.
- If you receive a school apron from the school, please wash and iron it after your child’s final use and return it.
- Students will head to school in groups, be sure to confirm the place and time of pickup for your child. In addition, guardians take turns to help guide the children at crosswalks to before and after school. This is called “*Hata-tobari*”.



## We Can Chip in for SDGs ~ Ever Thought of “ethical consumption”? ~

The term “ethical consumption” refers to environmentally-friendly consumption (including humans). Chances are that our attitudes toward daily shopping result in an unfair society. For example, we see some cases of illegal labor and environmental destruction happening in the processes for the sake of producing various products such as food. Some examples of ethical consumption include usings reusable bags and bottles, as well as conserving energy; however, there must be some other things that we can do, for example...

### ○Purchasing “fair-trade” products

“Fair-trade” products have a label attached on them. It is an international trademark possessed and licensed by Fairtrade International Organization. Among the products which are offered at low prices are those which are produced in developing countries where the cost of materials and labor is low. On some occasions, workers are not duly paid for the prices to remain low. The purpose of fair-trade is to improve the working environment and living conditions of the workers by purchasing their products at appropriate prices.



The FAIRTRADE Mark

### ○Consuming locally grown products

Consumers can purchase fresh farm produce at reasonable prices in their own communities. It does not require a large transport cost which makes it environmentally friendly and it gives profit to the local producers.

### ○Select organic products

Organic products are good to eat, do not cause skin irritation and are free of chemicals. “*Yuuki*” is the Japanese word for “organic.” These products help protect the Earth’s ecosystems.



Listed below are some more examples of “ethical consumption.”

- Purchasing products made of recycled materials and energy efficient (environmentally friendly) products.
- Purchasing products made from disaster-stricken areas. (Devastated area support)
- Purchasing products made at welfare institutions. (Self-independence support for the disabled)
- Purchasing goods which provide donations to the communities who make them.

Certification marks will help you to choose ethical products. Take notice of the marks listed below and you can join in the movement to be more environmentally conscious.

### Eco Mark

This mark guarantees that the product does little harm to the environment through the entire process from production to disposal, and therefore, helps to preserve the environment.



### “Recycled Milk Carton” Mark

This mark is put on products which use recycled milk cartons as materials.



### Green Mark

In principle, this mark shows that over 40% of the products materials come from recycled paper waste. (As for toilet paper, 100%, and over 50% for newspaper material and printing paper)



### Recyclable Mark

When you dispose of products with the below-mentioned marks, use them to proper separate your garbage.



## Let's get to know SDGs' Goals!



### 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities

Livable circumstances which allow every inhabitant easy access to a decent and appropriately priced house, and proper public services. The realization of the community that every individual can participate without prejudice.

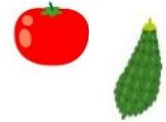


### 12. Responsible Consumption and Production

Producing and consuming only the required amount of the needed item. This helps to minimize the negative impact on the environment in the whole process of material-procurement, production of goods, and disposal of them.



## Would You Like to Grow Vegetables?



In March, it is finally the return of spring in Japan. The warm days continue, animals and plants that have been dormant in the soil until now will resurface. It's a great season to plant vegetables and flowers. You can also grow your own pesticide-free vegetables so that you can eat your favorite vegetables safely. Let's have an enriching life by watching the daily growth and enjoying the harvest.

### Various ways of raising and enjoying vegetables

- You can buy vegetable seeds and seedlings at home centers and grown them in pots or planters. Vegetables such as green onions, mini tomatoes, green peppers, etc. are all great choices.
- By planting vines of vegetables with vines such as bitter melon, loofah, and cucumber on the window sill, it is possible to reduce the increase your room temperature in summer. Refreshing to the eyes and you can relax in a cooler room.
- You can also grow potatoes, radishes, etc., in a sturdy and durable bag.



### If you want to start farming more seriously...

There are community gardens and recreation farms where you can experience farming throughout the year. In Himeji, there are 3 community gardens: each have parking lots, toilets and a water supply. They also hold exchange meetings and cultivation seminars. There are about 50 recreational farms as well.



community gardens



recreation farms

### If you want a simple harvest experience...

There are many tourist farms in Himeji city where you can experience harvesting seasonal vegetables and fruits (strawberries, potatoes, sweet potatoes, etc.).



## People Interview



### Ms. Celeste Plak (Netherlands)

Ms. Plak is a Dutch national women's volleyball player. She helped her team finish fourth at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics. Since 2021, she has been based in Himeji City as an outside hitter for "Victorina Himeji" in the V League 1st Division.

**Q** What was your childhood like?

**A** I grew up in Tuitjenhorn, a town about 40km away from the capital city of Amsterdam. It is a very calm and nice town near the sea with thriving agriculture and livestock. As I was a child, I used to pick flowers in the tulip fields. If you remove the flower stalks soon after they bloom, you get good bulbs. I have also ridden on the back of a tractor and helped harvest cabbage.

**Q** Why did you become a volleyball player?

**A** All my family have a background in sports. My father was a Muay Thai World Champion. I started learning *Judo* when I was 6 years old, and then I started playing volleyball. When I was a student, I was also interested in soccer, but eventually decided to play volleyball. It is an indoor sport, also it felt that volleyball is a sport where all the team work together even more.

**Q** What is your impression of Himeji?

**A** In Netherlands, Japan is famous for "*Pokemon, Sushi and Ninja*". I used to watch Japanese anime on TV. I was interested in cultures and customs that differed from those of the West. I came to Japan without researching much. When I came to Himeji, I thought that Himeji Castle and other traditional architecture and crafts were wonderful. Also, there are many young people, and they are full of energy, which makes me feel great as well.

**Q** What are some of your goals and would you like to give a message to your young fans?

**A** My current goal now is to contribute more to my team's victory. I want to study Japanese more and communicate better with my teammates. Also, I would like to be a role model for the children watching. Everyone, never give up on your dreams. I am glad that I did not give up on mine. Believe in yourself and follow your heart.



## Save on Utility Bills



Rising utility bills expenses like your electricity fee can put a dent in household budgets. Reviewing your contract's amperage and energy contract content could help you lower your payments. You can take advantage of special discount plans by receiving multiple services from the same provider, such as electricity and gas set discounts as well as electricity and smartphone set discounts.

On the other hand, water rates have not increased in Himeji City since 2020. That charge, along with your sewer bill is paid every two months.

### Disaster Prevention Vocabulary of This Issue

<sup>しんど</sup>震度 (*shindo*) Seismic intensity: the degree of shaking caused by an earthquake at a certain point.

マグニチュード Magnitude: the scale of earthquake itself

Ex) *Shindo* is 1, Magnitude is 2.

Even earthquakes with a small scale of “magnitude” can have the larger “seismic intensity”. It is because that the closer the distance from the epicenter, the stronger the ground shakes.

### Letter from the Editor

<sup>けいちつ</sup>“啓蟄 (*Keichitsu*) ” is a word that symbolizes spring. This is when the animals awake from hibernation for the warmer weather. Why don't you go cherry blossom viewing and hiking?

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You can read previous issues of “VIVA! ひめじ” on the website of Himeji Cultural and International Exchange Foundation International Exchange Section.

The next issue will be available in June, 2023.

We welcome your comments and suggestions. We are also looking for translators and native speakers to assist us with translating and proofreading upcoming editions. If you are interested, please contact us at the address on the right.



Website

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