

## Yabukita: Japan's Workhorse Tea Cultivar

From the Teas.co.uk wiki

**Yabukita, in summary:** Japan's dominant tea cultivar at 70 to 75% of plantings, the balanced workhorse behind most sencha and the reference baseline for what Japanese green tea tastes like.

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for Yabukita: Japan's Workhorse Tea Cultivar. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/yabukita-cultivar/>*

If you have drunk Japanese green tea, you have very likely drunk Yabukita. This sits in the cultivar cluster beside [samidori](#).

*Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in March 2026.*

### What Yabukita is

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for What Yabukita is , Yabukita: Japan's Workhorse Tea Cultivar. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/yabukita-cultivar/>*

Yabukita is by far the most widely planted Japanese tea cultivar, the default backbone of most sencha and around 70 to 75% of all Japanese tea plantings. It was selected by Hikosaburo Sugiyama, a tea farmer in Shizuoka who picked out exceptional plants from his fields for their vigour, cold hardiness and balanced flavour, and it was formally registered as a cultivar in 1953. Through the following decades it progressively replaced traditional seedling-grown bushes across Japan as its reliability proved itself. In the cup it gives a balanced, recognisably "classic" Japanese green profile, grassy, fresh, moderately sweet and umami, which is precisely why it is the baseline that named single-cultivar teas are judged against. See [green tea](#) for the wider category.

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Aspect	Answer
What it is	Japan's dominant tea cultivar; backbone of most Japanese green tea
Share of Japan	~70-75% of Japanese tea plantings; close to monoculture status

Aspect	Answer
Created	Selected by Hikosaburo Sugiyama; registered 1953
Genetic origin	Selection from existing tea bushes; lineage from <i>Camellia sinensis</i> var. <i>sinensis</i>
Best growing regions	Shizuoka, Kagoshima, Mie, broad climatic tolerance across Japan
Flavour signature	Balanced umami, fresh grassy notes, moderate astringency, clean finish
Tea types produced	Sencha (predominant), bancha, hojicha base, occasionally matcha
Harvest timing	Mid-season cultivar; first flush typically late April-early May
Strengths	Cold-hardy, productive, balanced flavour, versatile across regions
Limitations	Monoculture risk; less distinctive than premium cultivars; pest susceptibility
Compared to Saemidori	Yabukita = balanced workhorse; Saemidori = early-harvest premium
Compared to Okumidori	Yabukita = mid-season; Okumidori = late-season fuller body
Framing	The reliable backbone cultivar; not exotic but consistently good

## Why it dominates

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Why it dominates*, *Yabukita: Japan's Workhorse Tea Cultivar*. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/yabukita-cultivar/>

The 70 to 75% share reflects genuine, practical advantages rather than habit. Yabukita is cold-hardy and tolerates Japan's climate variability, including spring frost risk, which lets it produce consistently across Honshu and beyond. Its yield is economically competitive, and it is versatile: one cultivar makes good sencha, acceptable bancha and a decent hojicha base, so it serves several product lines at once. Its leaves handle steaming and rolling reliably, giving a predictable final character, and its umami-fresh-astringent balance suits everyday Japanese green tea. In short, it is the rational economic choice for most growers; the quality gap against premium cultivars is real but modest, and the price difference justifies the dominant choice.

## How it tastes

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for How it tastes*, *Yabukita: Japan's Workhorse Tea Cultivar*. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/yabukita-cultivar/>

Yabukita's profile is what most UK drinkers picture as "Japanese green tea", precisely because it dominates the category. The liquor is a pale yellow-green, bright and clean. The aroma is fresh grass with marine, seaweed undertones and a light vegetal sweetness. The taste is a balanced umami (less intense than premium cultivars), grassy freshness and moderate astringency in the finish, clean and consistent rather than complex, with a light to medium body. Against its alternatives, Saemidori gives more pronounced umami sweetness, Asatsuyu a lighter and more delicate profile, and Okumidori a fuller body, while Yabukita sits squarely in the balanced middle. It is also more forgiving of brewing variation than premium cultivars, harder to ruin with a slight over-steep, which is part of its everyday reliability.

## The monoculture concern

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The monoculture concern , Yabukita: Japan's Workhorse Tea Cultivar. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/yabukita-cultivar/*

Yabukita's dominance creates legitimate concerns the Japanese tea industry works to manage. When one cultivar dominates, a pathogen or pest that targets it can hit yields hard, and that genetic uniformity also narrows the options for adapting to a shifting climate. There is a flavour cost too: when most Japanese green tea is a single cultivar, the rich genetic diversity of Japanese tea is underexpressed in commercial product. The response is active: prefectures and breeders promote alternative cultivars such as Saemidori, Yutakamidori and Okumidori, and some areas incentivise diversification. The concern is real but managed, and Yabukita itself is not the problem; UK drinkers can support diversity simply by trying an alternative-cultivar tea now and then.

## Using it as a buyer

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Using it as a buyer , Yabukita: Japan's Workhorse Tea Cultivar. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/yabukita-cultivar/*

Treat Yabukita as your reference point. When you buy a standard Japanese sencha with no cultivar stated, expect Yabukita or a Yabukita-dominant blend, and that is your baseline for Japanese green tea taste. Trying named alternative-cultivar teas (Saemidori, Asatsuyu, Okumidori) against that baseline is the quickest way to learn what cultivar variation actually means in the cup. Region matters within the cultivar, too: Shizuoka and Kagoshima are both Yabukita-heavy but give different regional character, so terroir is still a variable. When a vendor specifically names a non-Yabukita cultivar, that signals craft attention rather than a guarantee of quality. The one thing to ignore is any vendor selling Yabukita as exotic or premium-by-name; it is the standard, and that is exactly its value. Explore [Japanese sencha](#) or the wider [Japanese green tea](#) range to start.

## Reference noted

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Reference noted , Yabukita: Japan's Workhorse Tea Cultivar. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/yabukita-cultivar/*

- [PubMed: Green tea catechins and human health](#)

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## More on tea cultivars

- [What is a tea cultivar](#)
- [Single-origin vs blended](#)

- [Sencha](#)
- [Matcha](#)
- [Bancha](#)
- [Japanese tea regions](#)

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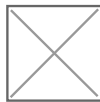
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