



JAPAN INFORMATION  
AND CULTURE CENTER  
在米国日本大使館広報文化センター

# TEACHING TUESDAY

## NIOI-BUKURO

Just as perfume is used in Europe and America, Japan has their own creative way of scenting garments, rooms, and furniture. Called *nioi-bukuro* (匂い袋; bag of odors), these sachets are made from ground incense ingredients which are put into a decorative cloth or crepe packet, and then placed in drawers, closets, sleeves of a kimono, or even around one's neck.

The appreciation of pleasant aromas is a big part of traditional Japanese culture. Known as *kodo* (香道; the way of fragrance), it is said to give practitioners a different appreciation of the world. Nioi-bukuro can be traced back to around the 8th century, when an incense called *ebiko* was used to keep insects away from things like clothing and books. As *kodo* evolved, fragrance became representative of the character of the person, and nioi-bukuro were re-purposed to be worn. During the Edo period (1603-1867), nioi-bukuro were often made in the shape of a kimono sleeve and worn as a fashionable part of a woman's etiquette.

Some nioi-bukuro are useful as insect repellents, much like mothballs, and those with strong-smelling ingredients are often used to scent whole rooms. In addition to their pleasing aroma, nioi-bukuro are said to protect a room from ill fortune all year round. Even today, they are popular souvenirs and gifts.