

# Japanese Grenade Parts Transformed from Trash to Treasure

Posted At : March 17, 2023 8:18 AM | Posted By : Admin

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**Kawagoe, Japan** What was once a desperate measure of wartime ingenuity has become art to some Japanese citizens. Residents in an area just outside of Tokyo have transformed ceramic grenade casings into flower vases and garden decor.

When iron supplies began to run low during WWII, Japan's military ordered potters across the country to make grenades. Today, thousands of the ceramic casings litter Kawagoe city's Kugedo neighborhood, where a one such munitions factory made the grenades for the imperial armed forces.



Locals took to turning the old casings into flowerpots and garden ornaments, according to retired electrician Sadao Tokita. He keeps half a dozen or more, along with a large pottery landmine, in a wooden box in his backyard. According to Tokita, the empty grenades aren't dangerous, since they were never armed with gunpowder or shrapnel.

The casings were discarded at the end of the war following the shutdown of the plant. Tokita recalls that when the war ended, the ammunition factories closed and workers smashed thousands of unused grenade casings on the bank of the nearby Binnuma River.

"Wind would blow, and gunpowder would fill the air," he said. "They couldn't grow anything in the fields because of the gunpowder." He also remembers that children collected the ceramic grenades as well as ammunition boxes scattered around the neighborhood. Boys would make small boats out of them to float in a water tank, he said.

Not all of the ceramic remnants are safe, however. In September, Misawa Air Base in northeast Japan ordered people to shelter in place after an airman brought home a Japanese Imperial Navy Type 4 ceramic grenade that he recovered while scuba diving.

Souvenir hunters reportedly still comb the area for unbroken grenades. It goes to show that one

man's old ordnance is another man's treasure. Hopefully the collectors remember that old mentions may be beautiful, but they can also be deadly.