

Vocational school and University

Great

“Tropical Garden City Okinawa”

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How do you feel about flowers and trees on the roadside you see unintentionally every day? I do not have a very good impression of this. Fallen leaves accumulate under the roadside trees and the traces of fallen nuts have blackened the sidewalk. If you look further at the side, weeds grow thickly, it is a situation that whether vegetation and flower that are planted or not cannot be distinguished. They exacerbate the landscape, lower satisfaction of tourists, and could become a factor that leads to a decreased number of customers.

Two years ago, I went to Singapore for 10 months for a working holiday. Upon my arrival in Singapore, I was surprised by a place called "Tropical Garden City", which was a city full of green. Inside the city, trees of some 10 meters tall colorful flowers like in the southern country were planted everywhere. Even people visiting for the first time are surprised by the large number of the green plants with admiration. In spite of being one of the largest cities in the world, it does not let you feel cramped at all, but it is refreshing because of the green. Lush trees growing neatly, beautifully well-kept flowers, give an illusion the whole country is wholly park. And this is the reason it has been popular under the name "Tropical Garden City".

Nevertheless, the park was not finished overnight. It is intended to position tourism as an important industry. In order to increase the brand power yearly, as a national strategy, it has been carried out for over several decades. 8000 kinds of plants from all over the world that suit the climate of Singapore were collected and planted aggressively. At the beginning, some people brought back home the flower. However, as they continued to promote the plan patiently over the years, the great view of Singapore today was completed. Or partly because of that, Singapore, as you may know, is a world-class economic country, with number of tourists increasing year by

year. While Japan received 8.36 million visitors in 2012, 14.4 million people visited Singapore in the same year. Effort and budget have been poured for management and maintenance even now, and one of three third of the land area is planted with trees.

On the other hand, how about Okinawa? In Okinawa Prefecture, under the "Green and Beautiful Island Action Plan" to promote the prefectural land development with lush, the government has been promoting various tree planting business initiative. As a result, road greening rate of the province is at 54.7%, significantly higher than the 9.4% of the national average. However, can we say that tree planting is done really well? I think the answer is "NO". As mentioned, the current situation shows that maintenance and management are not in effect. Good as it may sound on the figures, I do not think this will lead to an improvement of the view and an increase in tourist arrivals.

With no industrial area and scarce resources, tourism is an important industry, or even as a lifeline for Okinawa. Considering the future of Okinawa, Singapore is a model country that should learn from. In order to further enhance the brand power of Okinawa as a Southern country, it has to plant more tropical plants like palm trees and hibiscus, Okinawa unique plants such as banyan and Tiger's Claw. Also, it should put more efforts in maintaining and managing them. And I think as a result, the view will be improved, hence increasing the satisfaction of tourists. They will have better impression and this will lead to an increase in the number of tourists.

If you were a tourist visiting Okinawa for the first time, it would be great if you could see various kinds of plants welcoming you from the airport on the way to downtown. How wonderful it would be! You would think of visiting this beautiful island once again.

I think in order to achieve these goals, the prefecture needs to be more attentive to the tree planting policy and recognize its importance. In addition, in Singapore, tree-planting policies have been promoted in the country and have become a main subject. However in Okinawa, it may not be bad if pursuing residents and government to work and cooperate together. Meeting the needs of the times by matching nature with now and the protection of the view are becoming important, if we could create a "New

Okinawa", with "Tropical Garden City OKINAWA" that we could be proud to the world, tourism in will continue to develop further Okinawa in the future.