

## 16. 竹は不思議な植物（2）：構造理解

These bamboos exhibit another strange behavior — they all flower at the same time, all over the world, irrespective of geographic location and climate, as long as they were derived from the same mother plant. It is as if the plants carry an internal clock ticking away until the \*preset alarm goes off simultaneously. This mass flowering phenomenon also attracts small animals, mainly rats. The sudden availability of fruit in huge quantities in the forest brings in tens of millions of hungry rats who feed, grow and multiply at alarming rates. After they eat all the bamboo fruit, the rats start consuming crops — both in storage as well as in the field. So, a bamboo flowering event is almost always followed by famine and disease in nearby villages. In the northeastern Indian state of Mizoram, the terrible event, known in the local language as mantam or “bamboo death” occurs almost like clockwork every 48 to 50 years, when the local bamboo species blooms and produces fruit.

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