

Seeds of Peace Growing in the World: Visiting the A-bombed Tree “Mother’s Tree”

2023/11/20 Yomiuri Shimbun

Six people from the U.S. came to Japan

Members of Green Legacy Hiroshima (GLH) (Naka-ku, Hiroshima City), who have collected A-bombed trees that have been burned by the atomic bombing of Hiroshima but continue to live on to future generations, and sent them to about 130 locations in about 40 countries and regions, have taken root and grown into young trees. In early November, six people from the U.S. state of Oregon, one of the recipients, visited Hiroshima City and touched the A-bombed tree, which is the “mother tree.” (Yoji Yamahata)

Learn from an Arborist

The six are Mike Oxendine, a horticulturist, and Jim Gersbuck [OH WELL, HARD ENOUGH FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS TO CORRECTLY SPELL MY LAST NAME], a member of the State Forest Service. Seeds and saplings of A-bombed ginkgo biloba, oyster trees, camphor trees, and other trees were sent to the state through GLH, and a total of about 160 second-generation trees are currently growing in parks and other places in the state.

After praying in front of the Cenotaph for the Atomic Bomb Victims on the 7th, the group toured the A-bombed trees under the guidance of GLH co-founder Nasreen Azimi (64), a resident of Hiroshima City. In front of the oyster trees and mukunoki trees near the White Shrine in the city’s Naka Ward, I received an explanation from Riki Horiguchi (78), an arborist who works on conservation.

Oxendine said the oyster tree, which was planted in Oregon about three years ago, is about 4 meters tall and growing much faster than expected. In response to Guardsback’s [GERSBACH’S] question, “Is there any impact of the A-bomb on the growth of second-generation trees?” Mr. Horiguchi replied with a smile, “I don’t know if there is an impact (of the A-bomb exposure), but I think that the trees of the second generation will try to grow stronger and faster because the mother tree has endured the harsh environment.”

While Azissi is concerned about the international situation where conflicts continue, she hopes that the seeds of peace will be sown and take root around the world. “The seeds of the A-bombed trees are a very easy-to-understand message from Hiroshima, and I hope that more people will get involved and that it will lead to a feeling of caring for people and nature,” she said.



A delegation from Oregon, USA, looking up at A-bombed trees while listening to an explanation by arborist Horiguchi (second from right) (in Naka-ku, Hiroshima City, Nov. 7)

Filmmaking

The documentary film “The Seeds of Peace,” which sheds light on Hideko Tamura, who was exposed to the atomic bomb in Hiroshima when she was 11 years old and lives in Oregon, USA, and is dedicated to planting seeds and saplings of A-bombed trees, is currently being produced in the United States. Director David Hedberg came to Japan for the first time to shoot in Hiroshima, and he said, “In Hiroshima, I want to carefully photograph the A-bombed trees and the people who are trying to pass them on to future generations.”

Tomoko Watanabe, 69, co-founder of GLH, who watched the film in the U.S., said, “I hope that the director himself touches and feels the reality of Hiroshima, where the atomic bombing caused disaster not only to people but also to all living things, and to reflect it in his work.”

Future Heritage

Since July 2011, GLH has been sending seeds and seedlings both domestically and internationally. Trees are planted in parks, schools, and gardens of public facilities, and Ginkgo biloba is planted in front of the United Nations European Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. In Norway, many seedlings are grown at the University of Oslo Botanical Garden and distributed throughout the country. GLH’s efforts have been selected as part of the Japan Federation of UNESCO Associations’ “Project Future Heritage 2014” (supported by the Yomiuri Shim-bun).

A-bombed trees There are currently about 160 A-bombed trees within a radius of about 2 kilometers from the hypocenter, including transplanted trees, in about 50 locations. There are various species of trees, such as eucalyptus and weeping willow, each with its own lifespan, and some of the trees have declined 78 years after the atomic bombing. There is a growing need to pass it on to the future.

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“Planting Peace” Set for September 19

by Mary Dickson

One tiny seed and one very small lady bring life to the Gresham Japanese Garden in the form of a Peace Tree. As noted in the December 2021 *Tsuru Soars*, the Garden received a ginkgo biloba seedling, one of over 50 now planted throughout our state. According to Jim Buck, who has cared for the tree since he got it about a year ago, it is healthy, though hasn't grown much, probably because it is still in a pot.

The Peace Tree project originated with the One Sunny Day Initiative, started by Hideko Tamura Snider, who was a 10-year-old living in Hiroshima when the United States dropped the nuclear bomb on that city in 1945. Amazingly, despite 140,000 people dying, she survived, as did a few ginkgo and persimmon trees within the blast zone. As a survivor, she is called a *hibakusha*. The trees are called “survivor trees,” *hibakujumoku*. A number of years ago, seeds were collected from the survivor trees and have now been sent around the world and grown as Peace Trees.

Hideko moved to the US, went to college, married an American, worked as a psychiatric social worker, received an honorary doctorate, and now lives in Medford, Oregon. She speaks all over the world on behalf of peace and the elimination of nuclear weapons. The mission of the One Sunny Day Initiative is to plant seeds of universal peace, hope, and reconciliation.

The tree's new home, called the Peace Garden, across from Ambleside Annex at the south end of Main City Park, will be officially dedicated on September 19, from 10 to 11am. David Hedburg, a filmmaker who captured the transfer of the tree to Jim Buck from Jim Gersbach of the Oregon Department of Forestry and has documented many of the Peace Tree installations around Oregon, will film the ceremony. This event is open to



Hideko Tamura Snider speaks about her experiences as a 10-year-old after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, in 1945.



Future home of a ginkgo Hiroshima Peace Tree in Main City Park, maintained by Friends of Gresham Japanese Garden

the public, and everyone is welcome to attend.

Preparing the site has required about 93 hours of volunteer time, according to Jim Buck. The task was difficult because the area had to be cleared of salal and Oregon grape plants with dense roots. The plants were carefully dug up so they could be transplanted into other parts of the garden. A stone path leads to the tree's new home.

At the base of the tree, visitors will find a plaque from Ms. Tamura Snider, who serves as a Peace Ambassador to the City of Hiroshima. The plaque will include QR codes so that visitors can use their cell phones to get more information about One Sunny Day's various educational initiatives. Hideko Tamura Snider has written a children's picture book about creating peace in the world called **When a Peace Tree Blooms**, a “story of affirmation for human resilience and a choice toward enduring peace through reconciliation,” according to the One Sunny Day Initiative's website.

A second plaque will identify the groups that worked together to bring the Peace Tree to GJG. They are: Urban Forestry Sub Committee, Gresham Butte Neighborhood Assoc., City of Gresham, and Gresham Japanese Garden.

Steve Stevens has donated the land-

scaping plan for the area, incorporating plants aligned with Japanese landscape design, including shrubs, grasses, currant, and heather, plant materials that provide color during all seasons.



Jim says, “within the plant kingdom, there are five divisions with over 300,000 species of seed-bearing plants.

The ginkgo is one division and it's the only species in its division, because of its uniqueness. It's the oldest living plant specimen, from the time of the dinosaurs. It takes about 15 years for it to mature, and until then, we won't know if it's male or female! If it produces fruit, it's female. If it only produces pollen, it's male.” Read December 2021's first Peace Tree newsletter article: https://www.greshamjapanesegarden.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Tsuru_Soars_dec-online.pdf.

Oregon has one of the largest collections of Hiroshima peace trees of any state or nation outside Japan. You can visit others throughout the state. The location list is at: <https://www.oregon.gov/odf/forestbenefits/Pages/hiroshima-peace-trees.aspx>.

Please join us on September 19th at 10am for the dedication.