

LOOKING BACK ON OUR CHAPTER'S HISTORY—The Dogwood Project

by Diana Cull, Chapter Historian

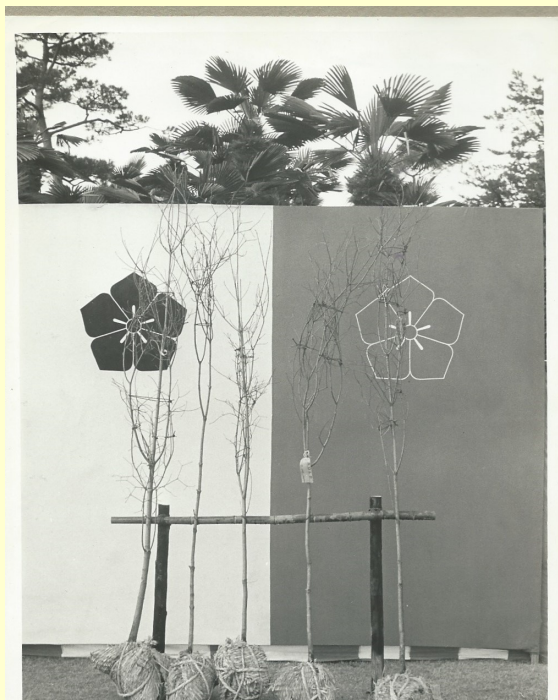
You all know about the gift of Japanese cherry trees from Japan to Washington, D.C., but do you know about the reciprocal gift of dogwood trees from the U.S. to Japan? In 1965, Ikebana International presented 150 dogwood saplings to the City of Tokyo as a goodwill gift. This was known as “The Dogwood Project.”

Like the founding of Ikebana International itself, the idea of the gift was the brainchild of Ellen Gordon Allen. She explained her idea as follows: *“Since the founding of I.I. on August 17, 1956, I have watched the growth and progress of Chapters all over the world, and especially in the United States. During these years, a deep-seated wish and ambition has gradually developed within me relative to presenting a ‘living gift’ to Japan as a testimonial of the friendship we have experienced through the wonderful art of Ikebana, and other arts of Japan. This ‘living gift’ to be some flowering tree such as dogwood, not native to Japan, but which would thrive there because of similar climatic conditions. This wish has grown each year as I view the blossoming of the lovely Japanese cherry trees here in Washington. As the cherry trees are reminiscent of Japan, it is hoped that the dogwood trees will be viewed by the Japanese people with pleasure and enjoyment, and as representative of our country.”*



Ellen Gordon Allen at the wheel with Gude Nurseries representative and Chapter No. 1 members shipping Dogwood trees to Japan.

To make this idea a reality, Mrs. Allen used her



powers of persuasion to solicit financial contributions from all 60 Ikebana International Chapters in the U.S. and their members. The response was enthusiastic; and as word spread, other organizations such as garden clubs and individuals (non I.I. members) also joined in support. The final gift was made in the name of “Ikebana International Chapters, Region of the USA, and the Friends of Ikebana International USA.”

Following a “symbolic ceremony” attended by the Japanese Ambassador, representatives of the State Department, Armed Services, Japanese and American Societies, National Capital Garden Club, and Chapter No. 1 members, the dormant dogwood saplings were shipped to Japan by the Gude Nurseries in March 1965.

Dogwood trees presented to Japan’s Imperial Family