

Sumitomo Forestry donates “The Miracle Pine” successor seeds to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

~Working with the British Embassy Tokyo to pass down memories of the disaster~

Sumitomo Forestry Co., Ltd. (President: Toshiro Mitsuyoshi; headquarters: Tokyo; hereinafter, Sumitomo Forestry) is pleased to announce that it will donate successor seeds from a grafted tree of the Miracle Pine Tree to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, in the United Kingdom. In advance of the donation to the British Embassy Tokyo, Sumitomo Forestry presented the seeds on May 21st to Julia Longbottom, the ambassador of the United Kingdom to Japan.



Presentation of the seeds

The seeds were collected from the cones of a successor tree propagated by a grafted tree of the Miracle Pine Tree, which survived the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. With the cooperation of the British Embassy Tokyo, the seeds will be donated to the Millennium Seed Bank at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

▪ Background

The Miracle Pine Tree is the lone pine tree to survive the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami, which washed away Takata Matsubara, a forest with some 70,000 pine trees in Rikuzentakata, Iwate Prefecture. The Miracle Pine Tree is widely known both in Japan and overseas as a symbol of recovery. Immediately after the earthquake, Sumitomo Forestry began working with Yonai Landscape Architecture, Japan Landscape Contractors Association, and Asako Nursery Farm to pass down the legacy of the Miracle Pine Tree by cultivating successor trees through grafting and seed propagation. In 2012, we were approached by the Millennium Seed Bank at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, with a request to preserve the seeds of the Miracle Pine Tree. However, due to difficulties in securing them at the time, we instead provided the seeds of Japanese Red Pine at Ryusenji Temple in Rikuzentakata which was also affected by the disaster.



The Miracle Pine Tree

Subsequently, we were able to make steady progress in cultivating the Miracle Pine Tree successor trees. To mark the 15th anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake as well as the 25th anniversary of the Millennium Seed Bank in 2025, we decided to donate seeds from a grafted tree from the miracle pine tree in 2011 with the aim to pass down the memory and legacy of the Miracle Pine Tree globally.

▪ About the Miracle Pine Tree successor seeds

The seeds to be donated were collected from the cones of one of the successor trees propagated by grafting the Miracle Pine Tree, which survived the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami. Because the successor trees are all clones of the Miracle Pine Tree, their seeds carry the genes of the Miracle Pine Tree. The seeds to be donated were collected in October 2025 from one 14-year-old successor tree.



Miracle Pine Tree successor seeds

- Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, is one of the world's leading botanical research and conservation institutions. They operate the Millennium Seed Bank, one of the world's largest facilities for the long-term preservation of rare wild plant seeds from around the world with the aim to pass these plant resources on to future generations.



Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew



Millennium Seed Bank

- Future developments

The seeds will undergo plant quarantine and other export-related procedures before being donated to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, where they will be stored long term at the Millennium Seed Bank. Sumitomo Forestry will continue to monitor the healthy growth of the Miracle Pine Tree successor trees while working on initiatives to preserve the memory of the earthquake and valuable tree genetic resources for future generations.

- Comments

Julia Longbottom, ambassador of the United Kingdom to Japan

“The ‘Miracle Pine’, the sole tree that remained standing after the Great East Japan Earthquake, stands as a powerful symbol of the strength of those who refuse to lose hope in the face of adversity. I am delighted that seeds which are genetically identical to the original ‘Miracle Pine’ will be preserved for the future at the Millennium Seed Bank at Kew’s Wakehurst site in the United Kingdom.



“When His Majesty the Emperor visited the UK in 2024, I had the privilege of accompanying him on a visit to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. The Millennium Seed Bank at Kew’s Wakehurst site is an internationally significant centre for the long-term conservation of valuable plant resources from around the world, playing a vital role in environmental protection and scientific research. The seeds being donated on this occasion will be carefully preserved as part of this important work.

“Behind the successful preservation of these seeds lies the advanced expertise and long-standing commitment of Sumitomo Forestry. I would like to express my deep respect for their sustained efforts, from the immediate aftermath of the disaster through to the cultivation and conservation of successor trees.

“These seeds of the ‘Miracle Pine’ also represent a new chapter in the relationship between Japan and the United Kingdom. The UK will continue to support the recovery of the Tohoku region, collaborating with the people of Japan to preserve these important memories for the future, while further strengthening cooperation between our two countries through initiatives such as this.”

Akira Ichikawa, Chairman of the Board and Representative Director, Sumitomo Forestry Co., Ltd.

“It is our pleasure to donate seeds from a successor tree of the Miracle Pine Tree, a symbol of recovery and hope following the Great East Japan Earthquake, to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Our sincerest gratitude to Ms. Masumi Yamanaka, artist/coordinator at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, for her efforts to realize this donation. The Miracle Pine Tree, which survived the tsunami during the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, continues to inspire courage and hope in many people. As a first step in passing down this symbol for the future, we are honored to present these seeds to Julia Longbottom, ambassador of the United Kingdom to Japan.



“The journey leading up to this donation was by no means an easy one. All of the seedlings we first cultivated unfortunately died, so we had to collect additional cones and secure and cultivate new seeds and seedlings. We also had difficulties propagating trees through grafting due to such issues as a lack of compatibility with the rootstock and the environment. We spent many years of trial and error.

“After overcoming repeated challenges, we successfully cultivated nine seedlings and three grafted saplings. It is with great joy that we are now able to donate seeds collected from a successfully grown grafted sapling.

“We sincerely hope that the Miracle Pine Tree successor seeds will be carefully preserved at the Millennium Seed Bank of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and come to symbolize the friendship between Japan and the United Kingdom as well as the enduring spirit of recovery.”

Sumitomo Forestry Group is engaged in a wide range of global businesses centered on wood, including forestry management; the manufacture and distribution of wood building materials; the contraction of single-family homes and medium- to large-scale wooden buildings; real estate development; and wood biomass power generation. By promoting our value chain called the Sumitomo Forestry WOOD CYCLE, we are harnessing our wide range of knowledge in forests, trees, and greenery to provide a comprehensive range of coordinated services that meet stakeholder needs. We will continue to work with local governments and private companies to promote and support their forest management, biodiversity, and environmental conservation efforts.

<Reference material>

▪ The Miracle Pine Tree initiatives

- April 2011 The Miracle Pine Tree Preservation Project is launched by Yoshie Yonai, division manager of the Japan Landscape Contractors Association, Iwate Division. To cultivate successor trees, project participants explore various propagation methods, such as cuttings, grafting, tissue culture, and seed propagation.
- December 2011 Three grafted saplings and 18 seedlings sprout.
- September 2012 Approximately 1,000 cones are collected from the felled Miracle Pine Tree. All cones are carefully taken apart to extract 75 seeds.
- March 2013 Seeds extracted in September of the previous year are sowed.
- June 2013 All 18 seedlings that germinated in 2011 die. However, nine new seedlings are successfully cultivated from the 75 seeds collected in 2012.
- September 2019 Three grafted saplings and nine seedlings grow steadily. At the opening ceremony of the Takamatsubara Tsunami Reconstruction Memorial Park, three successor trees return to their homeland for planting.
- March 2021 Upon the request of Rikuzentakata, one successor tree is donated to Nagoya in gratitude for their disaster recovery support efforts.
- June 2023 One successor tree is donated to Rikuzentakata at the 73rd National Tree Planting Festival Iwate 2023.
- October 2025 Seeds for the donation to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, are taken from one of the three grafted saplings that germinated in 2011.

▪ Related press releases

- December 14, 2011: [Saplings Successfully Grow from Rikuzentakata City's "Pine Tree of Hope" ~Preserving Young Trees for Future Generations~](#)
- December 7, 2012: [Progress Report on the Cultivation of Rikuzentakata City's "Pine Tree of Hope" Successor Trees](#) (Japanese only)
- June 18, 2013: [Progress Report on the Cultivation of Rikuzentakata City's "Pine Tree of Hope" Successor Trees](#) (Japanese only)
- September 24, 2019: [Successor trees to the Miracle Pine return home ~ Rikuzentakata City, Takamatsubara Tsunami Memorial Park tree-planting to commemorate the opening of the park~](#)



Seedling germinated in 2011



Cones collected in 2012



Successor trees in Rikuzentakata

▪ Clonal propagation results

July 1998	World's first successful tissue culture propagation of a Dipterocarpaceae tree
April 2000	World's first successful tissue culture propagation of a weeping cherry tree (Daigoji Temple, Kyoto)
March 2009	Successful tissue culture propagation of a Chokozanshidare-zakura weeping cherry tree at Shotaiji Temple, Odawara
February 2010	Successful tissue culture propagation of an Omuro-zakura cherry tree at Ninnaji Temple, Kyoto
April 2011	Successful tissue culture propagation of a Yuten-zakura cherry tree at Seiganji Temple, Shinagawa Ward (Tokyo)
February 2012	Successful tissue culture propagation of a Yodo-zakura weeping cherry tree at Ninnaji Temple, Kyoto
April 2012	Successful tissue culture propagation of a Myoho-zakura cherry tree at Ankokuronji Temple, Kamakura
March 2013	Successful tissue culture propagation of an Ebayama-zakura cherry tree, in collaboration with the Hiroshima University High School
March 2015	World's first successful tissue culture propagation of Beniwa KonBai, a flowering plum tree at Kitano Tenmangu Shrine, Kyoto
April 2015	World's first successful tissue culture propagation of Someiyoshino (Manabe no Sakura, Tsuchiura City's natural monument)
April 2016	Successful tissue culture propagation of a Kitano-zakura cherry tree at Kitano Tenmangu Shrine, Kyoto
February 2019	Successful cultivation of a successor tree (seedling) of Izumi no Ichiyomatsu, a natural monument of Minamisoma, Fukushima Prefecture
April 2019	Successful tissue culture propagation of a Gojogawa-zakura cherry tree in Oguchi, Aichi Prefecture (400 trees delivered)
October 2020	Successful tissue culture propagation of Furo, Fuyoho, and Sazarewa, Nagahama Bonbai bonsai plum trees estimated to be 350~400 years old
March 2022	Successful tissue culture propagation of Sakurakabu, a nationally designated special natural monument of Izu Oshima, Tokyo
April 2023	Successful tissue culture propagation of a Hiyoshi-zakura cherry tree at Hiyoshi Taisha Shrine, Shiga Prefecture

(Reference)

Seedling propagation by tissue culture: https://sfc.jp/treecycle/value/naegi_zousyoku.html

Video: https://youtu.be/eWgtN_r9HcA?si=msnN2Vcnx8YEfD2z

- Sumitomo Forestry's Sakura no Tasuki Project

Sumitomo Forestry has propagated seedlings of over 25 historically and culturally important trees to pass on to future generations, including the Taiko Shidare-zakura at Daigoji Temple and the Izumi no Ichiyomatsu, a natural monument of Minamisoma, Fukushima Prefecture. In March 2026, we launched the Sakura no Tasuki Project to better systematize efforts to preserve and raise awareness of these heritage trees for future generations. Long

cherished by the people of Japan, sakura (cherry trees) are now globally recognized as a symbol of Japan. The word "tasuki" refers to a sash that is passed from one relay race runner to the next. We incorporated this word to convey our desire to continuously pass on precious things for the future as well as to symbolize the connection between scientific technologies, such as tissue culture, and cultural value. The Sakura no Tasuki Project is a comprehensive initiative being promoted not only to cultivate cherry trees but also other heritage successor trees.



Sumitomo Forestry Group formulated Mission TREEING 2030, our long-term vision with 2030 as the target year, the same target year as our SDGs. In this long-term vision, we defined three values – providing value for our planet, for people and society, and for the market economy. Of these three values, this project is one element of our efforts to further raise value for people and society. Through it, we are striving to preserve heritage trees along with the memories and local cultures that have grown together with them.

(Related release) [Launch of Sumitomo Forestry's Sakura no Tasuki Project ~ Utilizing tissue culture \(cloning\) technology to preserve and pass on to future generations cherry trees that are aging or declining due to environmental changes](#)

- Future initiatives

Sumitomo Forestry will continue to support initiatives to pass on to future generations heritage trees owned and managed by Shinto shrines, Buddhist temples, and local governments. We propose conservation utilization plans, propagate successor trees, restore tree vitality, and other efforts based on the results of tree vitality and ecological surveys, DNA-based cultivar identification analyses, and other tests. We also provide consultation regarding the propagation of heritage and ancient trees. For further details, please contact the Forest and Landscape Research Center (https://sfc.jp/treecycle/tree_utilization/).