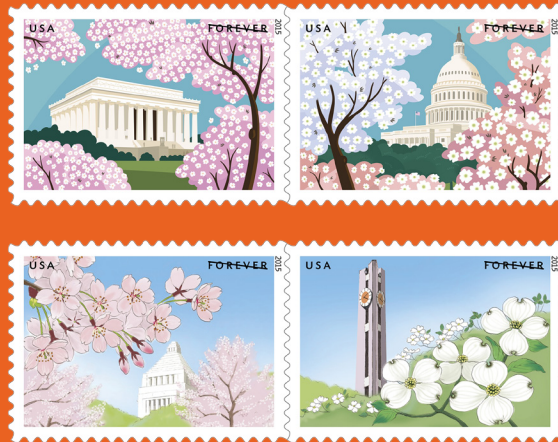


STAMP SCOOP



GIFTS OF FRIENDSHIP

It's often customary for nations to exchange gifts with one another as a show of mutual interest or political alliance. In the US, many of these gifts have become iconic American landmarks, distinguishing our country as a diplomatic friend of many. In Washington, DC, beautiful cherry blossoms have bloomed every year since 1912, when they were ceremoniously bestowed on our capital from the nation of Japan.

After a first batch of trees arrived diseased in 1910, a cooperative group consisting of chemist Dr. Jokichi Takamine, Dr. David Fairchild of the US Department of Agriculture, Eliza Scidmore – the first female board member of National Geographic, and first lady Helen Taft, worked to fulfill Japan's gorgeous gift. 3,000 beautiful specimens were finally ready to plant in 1912 and First Lady Taft laid them down with Viscountess Chinda, wife of the Japanese ambassador, along the Tidal Basin that year. In 1915, President Taft returned the favor when he sent a collection of dogwood trees to Japan.

In honor of the dogwood trees' centennial, the United States and Japan once again solidify their friendship with a set of jointly issued stamps. Two stamps depict the Lincoln Memorial and Capitol Building amidst a bunch of cherry blossoms, while the other two, designed by Japan Post, show Tokyo's National Diet Building and Clock Tower framed by fragrant dogwoods.

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