

Partners in Profile

Marta Joanna Monder and Tomasz Zawistowski

Polish Academy of Sciences Botanical Garden Center for Biological Diversity Conservation in Powsin

Poland



Narrative by Dr. Marta Joanna Monder:

Marta Joanna Monder (BAgrEng, PhD, DSc.) is head of the Department of Dendrological Collections at the Polish Academy of Sciences Botanical Garden CBDC. Since 1998, she has been the founder and curator of the National Collection of Rose Cultivars. She supervises the design, construction, and maintenance of the dendrological collections and nurseries of the Garden. Her research focuses on the genus Rosa and their cultivation, reproduction, preservation of crop varieties, anatomy and phenology. She speaks, teaches, writes, and publishes articles in various science magazines.

Tomasz Zawistowski (PhD) is a mechanical engineer at the Polish Academy of Sciences. He was the bridge making the planting in Poland happen. He and his wife visited Hiroshima in 2018 during the beautiful Sakura season. They visited Shukkeien and then Hiroshima Castle, where they saw one hibaku jumoku that left a lasting impression, as he described the sight as "the trigger that conceived the thought of commemorating the Hiroshima tragedy." He met and discussed the future with GLH Coordinator Dr. Nassrine Azimi, who wrote the biography of his late cousin, Beate Sirota Gordon, revered by Japanese women for drafting the equal rights article of the Japanese Constitution.

Polish Academy of Sciences Botanical Garden - Center for Biological Diversity Conservation in Powsin is an auxiliary scientific unit conducting research, educational and cultural activities. Its research covers a wide range of areas from experimental botany to environmental protection. The Garden is open to public with plant collections and exhibitions for recreational, educational, and cultural purposes.

My connection with Hiroshima has a special meaning to me, because this city, despite huge damage, was able to survive, rebuild its strength, and give hope to the future generations. The hibaku jumoku reminds us about this.

I work at a botanical garden and my interests are focused around plants, but especially roses. Among roses there is one special variety: "Peace," which was also a message after the Second World War. Just before World War II, Francis Meilland and his father selected a new cultivar and called it 'Mme A. Meilland' to honor his mother and his wife. However, history has changed the fate of this rose, considered to be an extremely valuable achievement of breeding from this distinguished family.

The outbreak of World War II and German troops' invasion of France contributed to the fact that the shrubs, in order to save the variety, were sent to friendly nurseries in several countries, in some the name was changed: in Italy ('Gioia'), Turkey, Germany ('Gloria Dei'), Sweden, Norway and the United States. The name 'Peace' was proposed by Field Marshal Alan Brooke after the liberation of France and this name was spread further by Conard Pyle Co. (USA, April 29, 1945). "We hope the 'Peace' rose will influence men's thoughts for everlasting world peace." These words were passed along with the roses to delegates to the first post-war UN meeting in San Francisco, on 25 April 1945.

It is estimated that by 1992, over 1,000,000 shrubs of this rose had been sold. Rosa Peace is still present on the market now. Her features of high tolerance to disease and frost allow her to survive during turmoil when people are in favor of growing plants that help them survive hunger over forgetful ornamental plants like roses. At that time, it had symbolic significance.

Today, such a rose can also find its place in the world. Like Hiroshima and hibaku jumoku, she should constantly carry her message of peace and memory of the tragedy in times when people forget that there is no chance of living on Earth in a state of war and hatred.



Rosa 'Peace'



PAS Botanical Garden



Hibaku Jumoku seeds germinated in Mar 2019

Q&A with Dr. Tomasz Zawistowski:

How did the GLH partnership start in Poland with the Polish Academy of Sciences Botanical Garden – Center for Biological Diversity Conservation in Powsin?

The cooperation started upon my return to Poland from a visit to Japan, where I found out about the GLH initiative. I got in touch with the PAS Botanical Garden – Center for Biological Diversity Conservation in Powsin at the outskirts of Warsaw, which is a venerable institution, famous for its collections of plants. They started the annual "Japanese month" a few years back and additionally the director, Dr. Paweł Kojs happens to be an avid dendrologist. He asked Dr. Marta Monder to take care of the replanting project, and she gladly accepted.

What does the partnership with GLH and the connection with Hiroshima mean for you personally and professionally? What is your vision for these saplings in Poland in the future?

I am not professionally involved in the project. But since it impressed me a lot, I started to talk about it with my friends and colleagues. The conversations actually bore fruit. One of my old friends, who lives in Gdansk – a town where I was born and where the World War II broke out, had an idea. It was to link the 80th anniversary of the war outbreak to the Hiroshima bombing (that virtually ended WWII) with a Hiroshima tree planting ceremony at Westerplatte and a reciprocal planting of Westerplatte tree sapling in Hiroshima. Westerplatte was the actual scene of the first shot fired during WWII. As both Gdansk and Hiroshima are members of "Mayors for Peace," such an initiative should have a chance of being implemented. It did not happen a year ago for many reasons (some tragic,) but we hope the bond will be made and will mature in the future.

When the headmaster of my alma mater, the No. Three High School in Gdynia, a neighboring city of Gdansk, heard about the project, he suggested my school along with several other high schools in the region should join the initiative as well. Considered one of the best in Poland, the No. Three High School is celebrating its 70th anniversary this coming June. They are planning a hibaku-jumoku planting ceremony, stressing the school's motto

in Latin: "VIR HONESTUS ET BONUS CIVIS (Honest man and good citizen)." Dr. Marta Monder kindly agreed to hand over several plants to the school.

What does the presence of the saplings mean here?

The PAS Botanical Garden CBDC in Powsin is a venue where Japan with its magnificent history and culture can exhibit its botanical treasures. The annual Japanese Month is under the honorary patronage of the Japanese Embassy in Poland and the President of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAS). The Reiwa Sakura Garden in the PAS Botanical Garden CBDC in Powsin was founded in 2019 initiated by Professor Romuald Zabielski, Vice President of the PAS. On July 1 2019, Crown Prince of Japan, Prince Akishino and his wife, Princess Kiko, visited the Garden and planted two trees during their first visit to Poland on the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Poland and Japan.

Here, we cultivate hibaku jumoku, with appreciation of the Green Legacy Hiroshima program, to carry their message of caution and hope, recalling the dangers of mass destruction arms, in particular nuclear weapons, and the relentless character of humanity and the resilience of nature.

Besides GLH's current activities, do you think there is anything else that can be done for the hibaku-jumoku for a nuclear-free world and reverence of nature around the world?

I would very much encourage the involvement of GLH in the tree exchange initiative between Gdansk and Hiroshima – I alluded to above. Such symbolic actions make a difference for the young generations and the impact on media is global. Also, I would take advantage of the location of the Radiation Effects Research Foundation in Hiroshima to inspire young people all over the world to develop interests in research through contests, events, and workshops. I think the reverence for nature exists among young people. But it is never too much to talk about it and make it clear to the wider audience how important nature is to us. Does GLH have arrangements with the Japanese Embassies around the world? Some ways to distribute your ideas globally would be very helpful.