

## Hiroshima Botanical Garden

広島市植物公園

Hiroshima, Japan

### SERA Tetsuya

Director of the Hiroshima Botanical Garden



*"In the past 10 years, Green Legacy Hiroshima has engaged in various activities, not only dispatching seeds of Hibaku Jumoku in Japan and to all over the world, but also building a network of partners, helping with scientific research on Hibaku Jumoku. On behalf*

*of Hiroshima Botanical Garden, we are delighted to be part of these efforts. I hope that the second-generations Hibaku Jumoku trees extend their roots around the world and expand branches and leaves flourishingly."*

### HAMATANI Shuichi

Assistant Director of Management Section, Hiroshima Botanical Garden



*"Happy 10th anniversary to Green Legacy Hiroshima! I have gained valuable experiences through GLH's activities. On one hand, I felt the broadness of the world through communicating*

*digitally with world partners on seeds' dispatch or sometimes even meeting them in person. On the other hand, I also felt the closeness of the world through encountering all the people who made connections with GLH. Due to COVID-19, our activities have been stagnated at the moment. However, we are hoping to resume our activities soon as the global outbreak subsides."*

**Hiroshima Botanical Garden is located in Saeki-ku, Hiroshima in western Honshū, on the hill facing the Seto Inland Sea. The Garden was opened to the public on 3 November 1976. HBG is the key to GLH's hibaku jumoku seed distribution to the world.**



*Tell us a bit about yourself and your current role at HBG. How did you get involved in working with plant as a career?*

**Sera:** I am from Hiroshima City. Raised in the suburban countryside, I naturally grew interests in wild plants. During my time studying at the Faculty of Science of Hiroshima University, I conducted research in Japan's small wild orchids, their distribution and phylogenetic evolution. That led me to start working at the Hiroshima City Botanical Garden. Since I started the position in 1983, I have been in charge of the cultivation, management, and exhibition work of various plants, including small orchids. Currently, I am Director of the Hiroshima Botanical Garden overseeing the overall operation of the botanical garden.

**Hamatani:** I am from Hyogo Prefecture. After graduating from university in Osaka Prefecture, I started working at the Hiroshima Botanical Garden in 1991. I liked being physically active, so looked for this kind of jobs. Accidentally coming across HBG's hiring announcement, I applied for the job. I am currently in charge of planning and public relations as Assistant Director of the Management Section.

*What is the history of the HBG — please tell us a bit about the institution, how, when and why it was created.*

**Sera:** The Hiroshima Botanical Garden was established on November 3, 1976, in the Itsukaichi Town at that time, an enclave location (Now, Itsukaichi Town is one of the areas in Hiroshima City). The purpose of establishment was to create a place for the citizens' relaxation, a place where people can observe nature closely, a community education place that shares knowledge of plants and promotes nature conservation. In addition, in order to make it a unique botanical garden, orchids were decided to become the plant as HBG's cultivation and exhibition focus, and Dr. Kouji Karasawa, an Orchidaceae specialist, was recruited as the first Director of HBG. The reason for choosing orchids as HBG's focus was that the local town of Itsukaichi was the first place in Japan to start commercial production of dendrobium.

The Hiroshima City holds the facility, and Hiroshima City Flora and Faura Association manages and operates as the designated manager. Around 40 staff members work in two divisions: the cultivation and exhibition division that cultivates and exhibits plants in the garden, and the administration division that handles various affairs related to event planning, facility maintenance, management, and operation.

*What were the original experiences of HBG with hibaku-jumoku? What is HBG's role in the hibaku-jumoku network?*

**Sera:** It is believed that the Botanical Garden cultivated the hibaku Aogiri II (Chinese-parasol), which was distributed by Hiroshima City to elementary and junior high schools in the city since 1987. After that, the "A-bombed Tree Exhibition" was held in 2005 commemorating the 60th anniversary of the atomic bomb.

In the global distribution network of the A-bombed tree seeds and saplings, we are in charge of proposing the species suitable for the destination, storing the collected seeds until their distribution, and procedures to dispatch seeds, including plant protection.

*Sera-san, you have been involved with Hibiru-jumoku and the GLH campaign almost from the start, and for years were also member of GLH Committee Group. What prompted you to do so, what were your initial thoughts about the campaign? What is your vision for the future of this network bonded by hibaku jumoku?*

**Sera:** In 2012, the GLH founders, Dr. Azimi and Ms. Watanabe, and a GLH member at the time, Mr. Yamada, came to the botanical garden and asked for our cooperation for the project. As a plant specialist living in Hiroshima, I felt the significance and necessity for me to help GLH with their project. I was honestly surprised by Dr. Azimi's network and enthusiasm for hibaku jumoku offsprings as peace messengers to the world. I was also impressed by the high level of interests that people around the world had for hibaku jumoku. I had been studying hibaku jumoku botanically, but I recognized, through this project, the socially important value of hibaku jumoku as seen in the eyes of many people involved in GLH.

Trees live long. Hibaku jumoku transcends our generation. I hope GLH continues to tell the story of them to a broader audience in the world.

*Hamatani-san, by this March, you were the focal point for dispatch of Hibaku-jumoku seeds to GLH partners worldwide. What were the exact steps involved in this process, from the moment seeds are brought to you?*



GLH Committee Members

**Hamatani:** The hibaku jumoku seeds are first collected by GLH working group members, and then processed (removing the pulp and other unnecessary parts) by the tree doctor, Dr. Chikara Horiguchi. After receiving the seeds from Dr. Horiguchi, we then store the seeds in seed storage (maintained at 5 degree Celsius). When there is a seed distribution request from GLH, we ask GLH secretariat to prepare the necessary documents while put the seeds in small bags and send them out for distribution. Depending on the seed conditions, we wash the seeds or conduct other procedures for the seeds to pass the quarantine smoothly.

In cases when quarantine in Japan is required at time of shipment, we apply to the Plant Protection Station and bring the seeds for quarantine. As soon as all the work such as preparation of attached documents is completed, the seeds will be shipped via international mail (small package). After shipping, we check the seed stock status and provide information to related parties along with shipping records.

*You have sent seeds to GLH partners in very different places, including many botanical gardens around the world — what are some of the experiences, thoughts and observations you can share with us about these exchanges? What is your vision for the future of this network bonded by hibaku jumoku?*

**Hamatani:** I feel that GLH's distribution of seeds carries the passion of each person involved. With such thoughts, I feel my vital responsibility as a staff member at the HBG. As a plant expert myself, I am making sure that the desired seeds reach the recipients by completing all necessary procedures, and to focus on shipping the seeds in good condition.

*Nature and Peace — increasingly the world is starting to see their connection. What role do you see for botanical gardens in the future, as contributing to peace and prosperity?*

**Sera:** I cannot immediately come up with any idea how botanical parks and gardens can contribute to world peace and prosperity. However, the beauty and diversity of nature, not just animals and plants, heals our exhausted minds in the real world and awakens our humanly, intellectual curiosity. If botanical gardens influence the visitors in such way, even with the slightest effect, isn't it then fair to say that the gardens are an essential facility for us human beings?

**Hamatani:** It is very difficult to name something concrete, but I hope I can play some role to world peace and prosperity.