

Japan: An Idea Takes Root

(6'44")

In many parts of the world, flower growers struggle to make a living, but one farmer's collective in Northern Japan has discovered creative new ways to prosper ...and their ingenuity is fast becoming a model for growers worldwide. Here's our story.....

VIDEO

AUDIO

OPEN ON MAN HOLDING
BOUQUET OF FLOWERS UP AT
AN AUCTION

*(SOUND UP: MUSIC AND MAN SHOUTING
OUT)*

NARRATION:

It's 7 am and the action at the Ota Flower Auction in Tokyo is fast and furious. Each of the thousands of boxes of flowers that roll through here is sold in less than five seconds. (14'47")

MAN HOLDING FLOWERS

These flowers are among the most popular. They are Ashiro Gentians ... named for the town where they are grown. They are so highly valued that they often sell for the top price before the bidding even begins. (13'69")

MOUNTAIN AND FLOWER FIELDS

This is the story of how a community of Japanese farmers took a lovely flower and made it better. And in doing so... saved their livelihoods and the economy of an entire small town in northern Japan. They are part of a worldwide movement that's developing new

plant varieties, protecting rights to them, and sharing them across borders. (24'69")

PEOPLE WORKING THE FIELDS
OF FLOWERS

For this family, it has been a lifelong quest. Fifty years ago, when 69-year-old Hideo Kudo began farming, his main crop was rice. But he never earned enough to support his wife and children. So every winter, he was forced to work construction in far-off Tokyo, leaving his family behind. (22'58")

HIDEO ON CAMERA

HIDEO KUDO: (In Japanese)
"It was really hard to leave my wife alone. Sometimes when I returned home, my wife would cry." (8'22")

ARCHIVAL PHOTO OF KUDO AND
FAMILY

NARRATION:
Mr. Kudo was determined to stay close to the people and the land he loved and so by 1971, he and some of Ashiro's other farmers decided to take a risk – they began farming blue gentians, starting with a variety that grew wild in the nearby hills. (16'81")

HIDEO ON CAMERA

HIDEO KUDO: (In Japanese)
"In the beginning that was the only one variety we had." (4'00")

PAN ACROSS GARVE STONE AND
FLOWERS

NARRATION:
Gentian flowers are highly prized in Buddhist Japan, especially if they are blue- a color considered noble. On Buddhist holidays, families like the Kudos leave Gentians on their ancestors' graves in tribute to their memory.

(14'00")

CU ON BOUQUET OF FLOWERS

In high demand, this flower became the perfect crop for a struggling farmer. (9'00")

HIDEO ON CAMERA

HIDEO KUDO: (In Japanese)

"If you cultivate rice, you need about ten times as much land to earn the same amount that we now earn from gentians." (6'82")

MAN PILING GENTIAN FLOWERS

NARRATION:

Over the years, the Gentian business thrived and Hideo's son, now 37, is poised to take over what his father began. (9'03")

YOSHI ON CAMERA

YOSHI KUDO: (In Japanese)

"There is a pleasure to nursing something living and the biggest pleasure is the moment when the beautiful flowers bloom." (6'18")

INSIDE FACTORY OF GENTIAN
PICKING AND PACKAGING

NARRATION:

Their success has been decades in the making. The Kudos are part of a farmers' collective that has created an industry of cut flowers and potted plants now worth more than thirteen million U.S. dollars a year. It began with Gentian growers pooling resources for research and development. (16'57")

YOSHI ON CAMERA

YOSHI KUDO: (In Japanese)

"We save 1 yen for every stem for the development of new varieties. (4'01")

We are investing in the economic future of this

area.” (2’78”)

NARRATION:

PAN ON DEVELOPING CENTER

The local government’s Research and Development Centre contributes to that future by helping develop new Gentian varieties with unique characteristics – like the red color or flowers that bloom in time for Buddhist festivals. (15’29”)

TAKASHI HIKAGE: (In Japanese)

TAKASHI ON CAMERA

“The way we develop new varieties is by crossing parent A with parent B and then we get the seeds.” (6’43”)

NARRATION:

HIKAGE POLLINATING FLOWERS

Takashi Hikage heads the research center. He propagates male and female plants, storing them in this cold room and carefully preparing the shoots to lay down roots. When they are ready, he pollinates female plants by hand. (19’76”)

HIKAGE: (In Japanese)

HIKAGE ON CAMERA

“It blooms only after the second year, and finally in the third year, we can start seeing the plant’s true characteristics and productivity.” (7’53”)

NARRATION:

PAN ON GENTIAN FIELD

But success is not assured until farmers grow the plants. The process can take as long as ten years. Still, Ashiro has developed dozens of new Gentian varieties that exist nowhere else

in the world. (13'00")

YOSHI TAKING PICTURES OF MEN
AT WORK IN FACTORY

Ashiro growers are also prospering because Japan is part of the international system that recognizes breeders' rights to royalties for new plant varieties. They license the production of their ten most successful Gentian varieties to flower growers as far away as Chile and New Zealand. (17'78")

TRUCK CROSSING
PETER BUTTON ON CAMERA

PETER BUTTON: (In English)

"If breeders didn't have protection// it would be possible for other people to reproduce it without any form of compensation for the breeder."
(6'71")

BUTTON WALKING TO HIS OFFICE
BUILDING

NARRATION:

Peter Button is the Vice Secretary –General of UPOV, the International Union for the Protection of new plant varieties, which is affiliated with the UN's World Intellectual Property Organization. (10'99")

BUTTON ON CAMERA

PETER BUTTON: (In Japanese)

"It ensures that the breeder can set up an agreement whereby he receives an income which will enable him to reinvest in producing new varieties." (8'34")

WOMAN WRAPPING BOUQUET

NARRATION:

Another important source of growth is exporting flowers. Ashiro gentians are sold not just in exclusive Tokyo shops but also in New York City and Brussels. It's a promising trend that

could ensure a future for Ashiro's next generation. (16'10")

(SOUND UP: YOSHI IN CLASSROOM)

CHILDREN IN CALSS GREETING
THEIR TEACHER

As a guest teacher, Yoshiteru re-assures these third graders they will have a future on their family's land. (7'01")

CHILDREN ANFD YOSHI IN CLASS

YOSHITERU: (In Japanese)

"I really want the children to love their hometown and to be willing to take on a new challenge and then get satisfaction from it."
(5'37")