Global Friendship in Bloom

How do you send 3,000 dogwood trees from the United States to Japan? Carefully.

**CHALLENGE**
Find an efficient way to send 3,000 dogwood trees to Japan during the course of three years

**SOLUTION**
UPS optimizes the supply chain

**RESULT**
UPS trims a year off a proposed three-year-initiative

**UPS PORTFOLIO HIGHLIGHTS**
Supply-chain planning, inventory management, optimization, air freight
A Logistical Challenge
100 Years in the Making

In 1912, the Japanese government gave the United States cherry blossom trees to represent goodwill between the two nations. The cherry blossoms planted in Washington, D.C. have become an unofficial marker of the spring, and millions of visitors flock to the annual festival that occurs during the trees' peak blooming season.

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the gesture from Japan, the United States Department of State wanted to return the favor. The U.S. decided to send the country 3,000 dogwood trees—the first official, large-scale gift offering of its kind.

The transport effort began as a three-year engagement. Originally, UPS planned to ship 1,000 trees per year, via climate-controlled ocean freight containers. Ultimately, the company worked with the U.S.-Japan Bridging Foundation to identify cost-savings opportunities by expediting the delivery.

The foundation valued UPS's ability to respond helpfully and creatively to government needs and designated the company the official logistics provider for the Friendship Blossoms Initiative. Its executive director, Paige Cottingham-Streater, noted, “It was important to say that a company like UPS was on board from the very beginning, because it made the shipment a reality.”

Along with corporate sponsors, the project took root as a collaborative effort among multiple government agencies. The U.S. Department of Agriculture worked with a Japanese tree expert to secure nursery space to cultivate the saplings as they mature before planting. The State Department collaborated with experts from the National Arboretum to identify which species of dogwoods would flourish in Japan, based on a number of considerations, including climate, terrain, and disease-resistance. With direction from Dr. Richard Olsen, research geneticist at the U.S. National Arboretum, the arborists chose six classic Cornus florida cultivars, three new trees from the University of Tennessee dogwood breeding program, and five hybrids developed at Rutgers University.

After selecting the appropriate trees, the next major consideration involved the physical transport of the dogwoods from the U.S. to Japan. As part of a trial run, UPS initially sent ten trees via air freight. Each of the first trees was loaded for transport with its wide root ball base packed inside a UPS Express® Box, and its slim trunk shooting out from it, roughly six feet high and blossoming. Once those trees reached Japan successfully, UPS was ready to go with a bigger shipment. Then in October 2012, another 150 dogwoods made the trip.

The first large-scale effort came in March 2013, when UPS flew 1,800 bare root, dormant dogwood saplings. The trees were watered before transit. With the brief transit time and relatively cool temperatures inside the air shipping container, the trees did not require any additional care. UPS managed the flights from the U.S. to Japan. Thanks to the well-established relationships UPS has developed with government entities, the company helped expedite customs clearance and phytosanitary certification—key validations ensuring that the trees arrived in compliance with Japanese agricultural regulations.

The plants shipped in October 2012 were prepared for immediate planting. The earliest sets of trees have been planted in several locations across the country, including the Tohoku region where the earthquake and tsunami hit in 2011. Some of the larger dormant plants were prepared for spring plantings; however, the majority of the plants will be grown to a larger size for planting in the fall of 2013. UPS is developing a planting circuit where UPS employees can participate in the historic plantings. The remaining trees will be sent to Japan in 2014.

UPS’s expertise in optimizing its shipping modes created the opportunity to reduce the originally-planned timeline for the shipments. That value wasn’t lost on the foundation, either. Cottingham-Streater appreciated the extra effort. “The coordination of incredibly complex logistics from start to finish has been seamless. It was like magic, because I don’t know what they did or said; we just knew that the shipments happened. We appreciated UPS’ ‘whatever-it-takes attitude’ to get the job done. They have been central to our ability to fulfill this historic gift.”