

For Immediate Release  
February 16, 2007

## **The New York Botanical Garden's Chrysanthemum Exhibition Presents the Beauty and Spectacle of *Kiku*, a Japanese Cultural Icon**

*October 20 – November 18, 2007*

### **Five-year International Collaboration Culminates in Celebration of Japanese Art, Life, and Culture**

*Kiku: The Art of the Japanese Chrysanthemum*, the most elaborate flower and cultural exhibition ever presented by The New York Botanical Garden, will open on October 20, 2007. The month-long exhibition is the culmination of a cultural exchange and collaboration between Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden in Tokyo and the Botanical Garden and will include:

- a flower show featuring distinct styles of *kiku* and other Japanese garden plants, including maples and bamboos, in the expansive courtyards of the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, the largest Victorian-style glasshouse in America;
- an exhibition of works on paper illustrating the plants of Japan in the LuEsther T. Mertz Library gallery;
- a wide range of programs for adults, children, home gardeners, and aficionados of Japan that celebrate the chrysanthemum and Japanese art, life, and culture.

### **The Chrysanthemum in Japanese Culture**

The chrysanthemum (菊 *kiku* in Japanese) is revered throughout Japan, where it has been meticulously cultivated and expertly trained into codified forms through floricultural techniques chronicled since the late 19th century. Cultivating and training *kiku* is exceptionally difficult, requiring expertise and constant attention throughout a 12-month growing period, during which time the plants are carefully watered, pinched, staked, and tied to grow in a variety of highly specialized forms.

*Kiku: The Art of the Japanese Chrysanthemum* will display several traditional styles of the Japanese chrysanthemum, highlighted by dramatic shapes, vibrant colors, and numerous blossoms. The “thousand bloom” plants feature hundreds—if not quite thousands—of simultaneous blossoms in massive, domed-shaped arrays, all from a single plant. Another type, single-stem plants ranging up to six feet in height, present one single perfect flower balanced atop the stem. Quantities of these are arranged in diagonal lines to form disciplined color patterns. A third type, cascades, present dramatic waterfall-like frameworks covered by small-flowered chrysanthemums.

Chrysanthemums grown in this Imperial style have never been seen outside of Japan in such an extensive presentation.

Integral to the chrysanthemum display will be traditional Japanese garden pavilions, or *uwaya*, built according to centuries-old construction techniques utilizing bamboo and rope accented with swags of purple cloth and red tassels. In addition to providing shelter for the plants, these structures create an atmosphere of Japanese elegance and style.

## A Celebration of Japanese Art, Life, and Culture

*Kiku: The Art of the Japanese Chrysanthemum* will be the Botanical Garden's centerpiece of a larger celebration of Japanese art, life, and culture that is organized around the chrysanthemum.

A magnificent exhibition, *Plants of Japan in Illustrated Books and Prints*, will be mounted in the William D. Rondina and Giovanni Foroni LoFaro Gallery of the LuEsther T. Mertz Library. The exhibition will draw from the Botanical Garden's own extensive collections in the Mertz Library and will present the rich exchange of horticultural ideas and perspectives between Japan and the West. It will trace the history of Western botanical exploration of the island nation, presenting plants that have become Western as well as Japanese favorites, including azaleas, peonies, hydrangeas, scarlet maples, lotus, and chrysanthemums.

The Botanical Garden will present a range of multi-disciplinary programming with participation from Japan Society, including:

- *Lectures* in Japanese garden history; plants of Japan for American gardens; kimono as art and tradition; and plants and gardens in Japanese painting and prints are being designed to inform audiences about Japan.
- *Programs in the performing arts* will include Japanese folk tales of love and woe; Taiko drumming; musical performances with *koto* and *shakuhachi*, and contemporary Japanese pianists; and Butoh dance performances.
- *Workshops and demonstrations* in ikebana, origami, *kiku* cultivation, traditional garden pavilions, bonsai, Japanese garden plants for home gardens, Saori hand weaving, and chrysanthemums in Japanese food and wine are being considered for presentation.
- *A new audio walking tour* through the Botanical Garden's arboreta and plant collections will feature specimens native to Japan, highlighting their horticultural development and appropriateness today to home gardeners in this region.
- *Kiku for Kids*, an array of activities for children and families exploring different aspects of traditional Japanese culture, is being developed with the support of the United States-Japan Foundation.
- *Guided tours* with docents.

## Multi-year Cultural Collaboration across the Pacific

In addition to Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden and The New York Botanical Garden, participants in this cultural exhibition include The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Japan Society, and the Japanese Ministry of the Environment.

Under the direction of Yasuhira Iwashita, masters of chrysanthemum curation and propagation techniques at Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden have trained Botanical Garden horticulture staff in traditional Japanese *kiku* training and display. In the process of preparing the exhibition during this cultural exchange, the Botanical Garden's historic Japanese *kiku* collection has been revitalized.

Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden, a 144-acre garden that blends English landscape, French formal, and Japanese traditional garden styles, was originally an Imperial garden entrusted with the cultivation of *kiku*, which is also featured on the crest of the Imperial family and a national flower of Japan. For nearly a century, it has presented an annual fall Chrysanthemum Exhibition and developed original methods of cultivation and display.

Founded in 1891, The New York Botanical Garden—a 250-acre National Historic Landmark and one of the world’s premier botanical gardens—is widely recognized for its floral and cultural exhibitions such as *The Orchid Show*, a magnificent spring flower show, last summer’s *Chihuly at The New York Botanical Garden* exhibition, and the annual *Holiday Train Show*, which annually attract hundreds thousands of people from the tri-state area, the nation, as well as tourists from around the world.

### **Diverse Design Team**

*Kiku: The Art of the Japanese Chrysanthemum* will be co-designed by Yasuhira Iwashita, Marc Peter Keane, and Susan Cohen.

- Yasuhira Iwashita is *Kiku* Master and Chief of the Chrysanthemum Department at Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden. A world-recognized curator and propagator of *kiku*, Mr. Iwashita directs the annual Chrysanthemum Exhibition. Many original methods of *kiku* cultivation have been developed at Shinjuku Gyoen, and unique display methods for specific forms originated as early as the 1880s.
- Marc Peter Keane is a landscape architect, scholar, speaker, and writer who has been based in Kyoto, Japan for many years. His design work, which reflects a blend of Eastern and Western aesthetics and philosophies, includes private gardens, temple gardens, designed parks, and historic districts. Keane’s publications examine Japanese garden design and history, as well as Japanese gardens and preservation in Kyoto. His work also includes an annotated translation of the *Sakuteiki*, Japan’s thousand-year-old gardening treatise. This classic work provides a fascinating look into the world of meaning hidden within the design of Japanese gardens.
- Susan Cohen, ASLA, RLA, is the principal of Susan Cohen Landscape Architects in Greenwich, Connecticut. She is an award-winning designer who lectures and writes about garden history and landscape design. Ms. Cohen’s exhibition design credits include *Sculpture from The Museum of Modern Art at The New York Botanical Garden* and *Momijigari: The Japanese Autumn Garden*, both of which were mounted in the courtyards of the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory.

*Generous donors to this exhibition and its ancillary programs include:*

#### **Presenting Sponsors**

Mitsubishi International Corporation  
COACH  
Mr. and Mrs. Wilson Nolen

**Sponsors:** Canon USA; Mitsui & Co. (U.S.A.); Inc., Sumitomo Corporation of America; Toyota Motor North America, Inc.

**Additional Support:** ITOCHU International Inc.; The JCC Fund; Marubeni America Corporation; The Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ, Ltd.; Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation; Mizuho Corporate Bank, Ltd.; Nomura Holding America, Inc.; United States-Japan Foundation, The Norinchukin Foundation, Inc.; The E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation; Japan-US Friendship Commission.

*Exhibitions in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory are made possible by the Estate of Enid A. Haupt.*

###

**The New York Botanical Garden is an advocate for the plant kingdom. The Garden pursues its mission through its role as a museum of living plant collections arranged in gardens and landscapes across its National Historic Landmark site; through its comprehensive education programs in horticulture and plant science; and through the wide-ranging programs of the International Plant Science Center.**

**The New York Botanical Garden is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.**

**A portion of the Garden’s general operating funds is provided by The New York City Council and The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The Bronx Borough President and Bronx elected representatives in the City Council and State Legislature provide leadership funding.**

#### **Media Contacts:**

The New York Botanical Garden, Nick Leshi 718.817.8658 or 718.817.8616

#### **Images Available**