

Nursery stock goes to vets as Japanese gift

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Sixteen years ago the Nishi family leased from the veterans administration in Washington a tract of ground that constituted surplus acreage of the veterans facility in Sawtelle. Being Japanese aliens, they could not own land, but they cared for it as if it were their own; they worked hard, they developed many fine plants and they specialize in the training of dwarfed pine trees.

The Pacific Rose nursery at Sepulveda and Wilshire boulevards, through their industry, became a garden of rare trees, of beautiful flowers.

Yesterday the Nishis presented all this as a gift to their landlord the United States government and to their good friends near whom they had lived for 16 years, the men at the veterans facility.

For the Nishis next Tuesday will be on their way to Manzanar, the government's resettlement colony in Owens valley.

December 7 brought immediate tragedy to the Nishi family, for the father, Kuichiro Nishi, 57, was interned by government agents for investigation.

But the government which was the Nishis' landlord is a government that extends justice to all and, after painstaking investigation, it cleared Nishi of all suspicion.

The Nishi family – Mrs. Hiroko Nishi and six children – have received word that their husband and father will be permitted to join them when they go to live at Manzanar.

During the absence of the head of the family Mrs Nishi and a son and daughter carried on the work at the nursery. Then came the evacuation order and the necessity of disposing of the property.

To the farm security administration they went for advice.

They were told that they might transfer their lease to another holder, or that they might sell their stock or that they might make legal arrangements whereby their property would be administered for them until expiration of the lease June 17, 1943.

Or they were told, they might turn over their remaining stock to the government in lieu of cost to have the acreage cleared.

Mrs. Nishi, whose workers call her "Ma", took counsel with her family.

Should they accept offers from the buyers who had indicated interest in their stock? One had made an offer of \$6000 for the plants and equipment of the nursery.

Mrs. Nishi's final decision, as she explained was: "I would rather give it to the government."

Now \$6000 is scarcely a reasonable price for an investment that the Nishis figure at \$10000. But still \$6000 represents some security to a family about to start a new life.

Even if the sum were reduced to \$5000 under the agreement whereby they pay cost of clearing the acreage, it would still be a welcome amount.

Mrs. Nishi shook her head. "I would rather give it to the government."

Her six children, all of whom were born in Los Angeles, and are, of course, American citizens, agreed with her.

So Henry, the son, a graduate of the Davis agricultural school went to attorney Raymond A. Nelson and told him of the family's decision.

Yesterday afternoon Nelson went with Henry to the officers of the veterans facility and the gift was legally recorded.

Setsu, who has been working with her mother ever since the father left, said, "Mother heard they needed trees to plant in the cemetery, and she thought it would be a good plan to give the government the trees. She had her heart set on it that way."

Mrs. Nishi nodded. She explained there had been offers for the stock, but because all offers for the stock fell below the value she assessed, she said she would rather give the stock to the government than take less than it was worth.

Many of the trees will probably be transplanted on the grounds around the veterans home and hospital.

The nursery itself may be used as a park or picnic ground for the men at the veterans home.