

Fritillaria camschatcensis: plants, people, places



The International Mail Art Exhibition and Fundraiser theme Collecting & Reassembling, provides a great opportunity to look at plants, people and places.

Four stamps were chosen for the collecting element of the theme. One from each country in relation to the distribution of *Fritillaria camschatcensis*. A plant with a long association with native peoples throughout the coastal areas of the Pacific Rim.

Each of the four stamps were reassembled placing *Fritillaria camschatcensis* as their focus, therefore change the original meaning of these miniature artworks.

Within the genus *Fritillaria*, only *F. camschatcensis* is found on both sides of the Pacific. Estimates suggest an eastward migration more than 10 million years ago, a symbolic pathfinder for human migration both ancient and modern.

Richmond Art Gallery is a non-profit municipal art gallery in the City of Richmond on the coastal of Lower Mainland British Columbia, Canada. Richmond is situated between the two estuarine distributaries of the Fraser River, occupying most of Lulu Island. The Coastal Salish peoples once collected bulbs of *Fritillaria camschatcensis* on Lulu Island where it would have been widespread. Today it is confined to Finn Slough in the south of the island, with its own rich history of human migration. According to the 2021 Census three-quarters of the Richmond population identified as Pan Asian.

Plant stories frequently focus on beauty, rarity, or novelty. This sequence shows how common plants cross political, cultural or racial boundaries to highlight our interconnectedness.

Collecting & Reassembling: International Mail Art Exhibition and Fundraiser

Richmond Art Gallery, Richmond Cultural Centre, 7700 Minoru Gate, Richmond, BC V6Y 1R8, Canada. 9 September – 5 November 2023

This design uses a section of 'Shower Below the Summit' from the series 'Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji' by Katsushika Hokusai. Issued as part of Japan's post war aspiration for peace based on justice and order, as enshrined in Article 9 of its constitution



Shower Below the Summit
1 Yen, Japan 1946



Fritillaria camschatensis, is native to coastal areas of northern Japan and the mountains of both Honshu and Hokkaido including Mt. Fuji. Its Japanese vernacular name, Kuro-yuri (クロユリ), translates as Black Lily.

This celebration of indigenous knowledge diverts from the historical record. Following contact with Europeans much of the local use of plants for medicines or food declined throughout Siberia.



Protected Medicinal Plants in Siberia
5 Копейка (kopeck), USSR (Russia)



Many western explorers noted that locals in Kamchatka gathered plant bulbs, including *Fritillaria camschatcensis*, from mice or vole nests with special hooks. Georg Wilhelm Stellar described ceremonies associated with this practice, noting that something was always left for the mice in exchange.

The use of Native Alaskan art on this stamp deflected from the systematic eradication of indigenous languages and culture following The Alaskan Purchase. However, it did mark a turning point for the native population which had declined by 50% since Vitus Bering first explored the region in 1741. Under the control of the Russian Empire, the population was indentured, and many were killed.



Alaska Purchase
8c, US Mail, 1967



In 1784 Captain James Cook noted that *Sarana* (*Fritillaria camschatensis*) was the principal vegetable of the Aleut. Local names included; Alugam kangaa, Aluga, Daa, Laagaq.

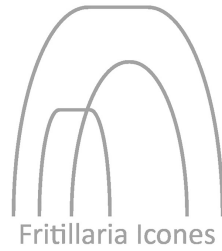
The thunderbird design for this stamp originates from a painting on a Kwakiutl house-front. The Salish decorative pattern signifies clouds over mountains. Georges Beaupré combined both elements and his typography in this stamp design.



Thunderbird: Indians of the Pacific Coast
8c, Canada, 1974



Fritillaria camschatensis is a culturally important food of the indigenous Coastal Salish people, the first inhabitants of modern-day Richmond, British Columbia



www.fritillariaicones.com

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