

THE HISTORY OF JAPANESE KOKEDAMA

苔玉

1 ROOTED IN TRADITION

Kokedama (苔玉), meaning “moss ball,” is a traditional Japanese planting technique that dates back over 500 years and is closely tied to the art of bonsai. Originating in Japan, kokedama evolved from earlier bonsai practices such as *nearai* (“no pot”) and *kusamono*, where plants were grown without containers to emphasize their natural form. This method reflects a deep cultural appreciation for simplicity and nature, allowing plants to exist in a more organic and less constrained environment.



500+ YEARS AGO

Rooted in ancient bonsai practices like *nearai* (“no pot”) and *kusamono*.

2 A PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE

At its core, kokedama embodies the Japanese philosophy of *wabi-sabi*, which celebrates imperfection, transience, and natural beauty. By replacing traditional pots with a moss-covered soil sphere, the technique creates a living sculpture that blends horticulture and art. Historically, kokedama was sometimes referred to as a “poor man’s bonsai,” offering a more accessible and affordable way for people to enjoy miniature plant displays without expensive containers.



EDO PERIOD
(1603–1868)

Plants were displayed naturally, reflecting the *wabi-sabi* appreciation for imperfection and simplicity.

3 A GLOBAL REVIVAL

Although kokedama nearly faded during Japan’s modernization, it experienced a revival in the late 20th century and has since gained global popularity. Today, it is appreciated not only as a decorative plant style but also as a sustainable and minimalist design element suited for modern living spaces. Its ability to merge tradition with contemporary aesthetics has made kokedama a symbol of harmony between humans and nature.



MODERN DAY

Revived in the late 20th century, kokedama is now loved worldwide for its beauty, simplicity, and sustainable approach to plant living.

LEARN MORE



Wikipedia – Kokedama
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kokedama



KCP International
The Japanese Art of Kokedama
kcpinternational.com/2023/02/the-japanese-art-of-kokedama/



Penn State Extension
The Art of Kokedama
extension.psu.edu/the-art-of-kokedama



Thursd
Kokedama: Japanese Moss Ball Plants
thursd.com/articles/kokedama-japanese-moss-ball-plants



“A small moss ball, a big connection to nature.”

