



Cherry blossom viewing throughout Japanese history

Nature is on display throughout the four seasons in Japan, and cherry blossom viewing is a particularly well-loved tradition that marks the coming of spring. You may find this cultural institution even more interesting if you understand how it originated and how it has changed over time.

There are several theories about the origins of cherry blossom viewing in Japan, but the practice likely began with flower viewing by Nara-period court nobles, who preferred Japanese apricot (*ume*) blossoms. Today, flower viewing brings to mind cherry blossoms, but Japanese at the time considered the cherry tree sacred and as such not an appropriate target for amusement. A poetry anthology known as the *Man'yōshū* includes poems about cherry trees, which have inspired belief as being inhabited by gods since the time of ancient myths.

During the Heian period, cherry blossoms gradually came to be seen by court nobles as the prototypical spring flower. It may have been that the cherry tree, as a native Japanese species, inspired a greater sense of affinity on the part of Japanese than the *ume*, which came to Japan from China, after Japan stopped sending an envoy to Tang China.

The *Tale of Genji* describes scenes in which palace nobles enjoyed banquets underneath cherry trees, and numerous poems in a Heian-era collection of poetry known as the *Kokin Wakashū* describe cherry blossoms during spring. These compositions offer a glimpse at how court nobles saw the cherry blossom as a symbol of spring.

Whereas court nobles' purpose was to view and enjoy cherry blossoms, spring for farmers meant the start of the crop-growing season, and their love of the cherry blossom as a harbinger of spring was imbued with religious meaning in terms of warding off evil. People scheduled festival events to mark their love of the flower and visited fields and mountains to enjoy themselves (known as *no-asobi* and *yama-asobi*, respectively). They encountered cherry trees there, and it may be that in doing so they saw themselves as spending time with the gods and praying for healthy harvests of grain.

During the Kamakura period, both samurai warriors and townspeople came to enjoy cherry blossoms. Tradition holds that it was during this period that cherry trees were planted in the mountains and shrines of Kyoto.

During the Azuchi-Momoyama period, samurai warriors would go outside to enjoy cherry blossom viewing. The famous feudal lords of the day, including Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Tokugawa Ieyasu, and Maeda Toshiie, held grand

banquets for this purpose.

During the Edo period and beyond, the practice of cherry blossom viewing spread among the common folk, while tree planters carried out an impressive program of cross-breeding and improvement. The Yoshino cherry (*Prunus yedoensis*), considered the prototypical tree for cherry blossom viewing today, was created during this time.

During the Meiji period, many cherry trees that had been planted in residences and gardens were cut down and burned as fuel due to the effects of the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War. Despairing at this turn of events, a tree planter named Takagi Hikoemon collected surviving cherry trees and replanted and preserved them. Later those trees spread throughout Japan, and their offspring continue to thrive today.

Now that cherry trees, which originally were enjoyed in Kyoto and Edo, have spread nationwide, there are slight differences in the timing of the cherry blossom viewing season, which comes in late April in Hokkaido, early April in the Tohoku region, and late March everywhere else (although cherry trees start blooming in early February in Okinawa).

If we weren't in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, people would visit cherry trees in various regions and enjoy cherry blossom viewing during their travels, and foreign tourists would flock to Japan to do the same nationwide. Since it's difficult to travel far under present conditions, why not visit some of Fukuoka's famous cherry blossom viewing spots and enjoy a virtual trip back in time as you talk about Japanese people's fondness for cherry blossoms and the history of cherry blossom viewing?



March 20th is Citizens' Disaster Prevention Day

March 20th was established as Citizens' Disaster Prevention Day by the city of Fukuoka to ensure that the memory of the Fukuoka earthquake of March 20, 2005 would not fade.

Please take this opportunity to plan your route to an evacuation center and to review your flood hazard map. Please check which items you will take from your home in a disaster, and your "rolling stock" of emergency food. A disaster is not someone else's problem. It is something for which everyone needs to prepare.

Please register for the disaster prevention info-mail service, "Mamoru."

If you register, you will be able to receive notifications of: (1) earthquakes, tsunamis, typhoons, heavy rain and other disaster prevention-related weather information; (2) family member safety confirmation email in emergencies; and (3) evacuation advisories, etc. from the local government. Such services are available in English, Chinese, Korean, and simple Japanese, so if you have not yet registered, please do so now.

<http://www.bousaimobile.pref.fukuoka.lg.jp/en/>

Fukuoka Municipal Flood Hazard Map

Maps by district have been created to provide useful information such as likely flood areas in heavy rains and where to evacuate to, so please use them to prepare yourself.

"Rolling Stock"

Buying three days' worth of provisions can be troublesome, and it is possible that the expiration date may have passed when it finally comes time to consume an item. Rolling stock is designed to solve this problem. The idea is to buy what you would ordinarily eat and drink, but simply do so in larger quantities, rather than buy a large quantity of emergency rations all at once. By replacing only the amount you actually consume, you cycle through two sets of stock, guaranteeing that you always have non-expired provisions remaining.

Tips on Rolling Stock

- Items such as snacks, heat-in-package food, and other dry-storage goods are best bought in bulk
- Water, which is heavy, should be kept in a place where it is unlikely to fall
- Store food in order by date, so you can eat the oldest food first

Childhood Immunization (Children's Immunization Week)

The seven days starting March 1 are Children's Immunization Week. During the week, various hospitals and clinics will be offering routine immunizations on weekday evenings and over the weekend (appointment required). It's a great chance to keep your child healthy by finishing up the immunizations he or she will need to enter kindergarten or school in April. Be sure to bring your maternity passbook and immunization passbook with you.

Some parents are putting off routine immunizations for their children due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but delaying vaccinations increases the risk of other, more serious diseases. The Immunization Act sets forth information such as ages and the number of shots for each type of vaccine. Don't put off visiting your hospital or clinic to get those immunizations - protect your child by keeping up with the schedule. And remember that if you fail to get routine immunizations on schedule, they may not be covered by your insurance.

Some pediatricians also offer immunizations, so it's a good idea to check in advance whether yours does.

Rotavirus vaccine was added as a routine immunization in October 2020. Rotaviruses primarily cause gastroenteritis. The vaccine is highly effective, and although it doesn't offer complete protection, it's clear that it reduces recipients' chance of developing serious symptoms. Until now, it was an optional immunization that cost about ¥30,000, but now that it's been designated a routine immunization, it's available free of charge—as long as you get it on time.



Hakata-ben series

Tottōto?

Meaning:

Do you have/did you get/have you gotten?

When you're going somewhere, for example a restaurant, have you ever been asked, "yoyaku *tottōto*?" Or when you're talking about going to a baseball game or concert, have you been asked, "*chiketto tottōto*?"

This expression incorporates three *to* sounds, and in the Hakata dialect, it's typical to use *to* and *to yo* as substitutes for *da yo* and *no yo*. However, *tottōto* is unusual even given that tendency.

People say "yoyaku *tottōto*" to mean "yoyaku *toreteru no*?" If they want the listener to make a reservation, they'll say, "yoyaku *tottōte!*" There are so many *to* sounds that you could be forgiven for losing sight of how many times it has to be repeated.

If someone is taking a picture, you might ask her, "*nantottōto*?" to mean "*nan no shashin o totte iru no*?"

Try using the sound *to* as you enjoy the Hakata dialect. If you can master this expression, there's no doubt that you can become an expert speaker!



Moving Season

Some of our readers may have just moved to Fukuoka this spring. If so, welcome to Fukuoka! Read on for to-do list you'll want to be sure to remember.

The following administrative procedures should be completed at your ward office within 14 days of moving to the city.

- Moving-in notification (tennyū-todoke)
- National Health Insurance and Children's Medical Card registration (as applicable)
- National Pension registration (as applicable)
- Long-term care insurance registration (as applicable)
- Children's allowance registration (as applicable)
- Elementary or junior high school enrollment (as applicable)

You can find information about Japan's National Pension program in a variety of languages at the following website:



<https://www.nenkin.go.jp/pamphlet/kokunenseido.html>

You can make an online appointment to complete new-resident registrations at your ward office up to five days in advance. If you send the necessary information, such as your change of address, you can speed up the process so that you won't have to wait as long at the counter. Online appointments are available for the following procedures:



- Notification of move (Online appointments are not available if you've moved to Fukuoka from outside Japan, or if you also wish to move your family register.)
- Enrollment in elementary or junior high school
- Registration for children's medical subsidies
- Registration for children's allowance
- Registration for National Health Insurance
- Application for continued classification as an individual who requires nursing care (assistance) under Japan's long-term care insurance program

You can make an online appointment at the following website:

<https://www.city.fukuoka.lg.jp/shimin/kusei/life/tetuduki/001.html>

If you're leaving Fukuoka to return to your own country, don't forget to complete the following administrative procedures first:



Checklist when returning home

- Procedures to complete at your ward office
- Moving-out notification (tenshutsu-todoke)
- Withdrawal from National Health Insurance and settlement of any outstanding balances
- Withdrawal from the National Pension program (application for lump-sum payment upon withdrawal)

At your bank

Close your accounts.

If there are any payments that get debited from any of your accounts, for example utility or phone charges, settle those before you close your accounts.

At home

Let your landlord know that you plan to leave at least one month in advance.

Make arrangements to get rid of your furniture and any bulky refuse.

Cancel electricity, gas, and water service along with any other utilities and settle any outstanding balances.

Mobile phone

Cancel your service and settle any outstanding balance before you leave.

Taxes

Resident's tax (Pay in full before you leave.) *Pay at your ward office's tax section.

Tax return (payment of income tax)

*Tax Office

Resident card

Relinquish your resident card at the airport.

If you forget to do so, mail it to the following address:
Odaiba Branch, Tokyo Regional Immigration Bureau
9th floor, Tokyo Kowan Godochosha
2-7-11 Aomi, Koto-ku, Tokyo 135-0064

Fukuoka City International Foundation offers information about life in the city, international exchange, and other topics in English, Chinese, Korean, and 16 other languages via its telephone interpretation service. Get in touch if you have any questions about life in Fukuoka.

<http://www.fcif.or.jp/consultation/life-interaction/>

Call us at 092-262-1799



Spring is also the season of strawberries. Fukuoka Prefecture boasts the second-largest harvest of strawberries in Japan. The most popular variant is the Amaou strawberry, which is the result of a long, five-year research and development program and which is only grown in Fukuoka Prefecture. The name is based on the first letters of the fruit's characteristics: red (akai), round (marui), large (ookii), and delicious (umai). In Fukuoka, you can find them in supermarkets and other stores. You can also go to strawberry farms and pick them yourself from now until around April. Be sure to check with the farm to make sure they're open before you head out.



Fukuoka Strawberries

Extension of Time to File Your Final Tax Return

If you are required to file a tax return for 2020, submit your application by April 15th. Please refer to the following website for more detail:
<https://www.nta.go.jp/taxes/shiraberu/shinkoku/tokushu/index.htm>



Coronavirus Vaccines Information

The latest information about the coronavirus vaccines will be on Fukuoka City International Foundation website in multiple languages.



Language Support for Foreign Residents

Do you need help for understanding Japanese documents? We have "Tutor Program" for you to support foreign residents in Fukuoka!

Applicable Person

Foreign residents in Fukuoka City

Contents of Language Support

Brief translation of letters and others
 Consultation in daily life, etc.

Service Period in 2021
 4 months

How to apply
 Please send us email to gogaku-v@fcif.or.jp



Specialized Counseling Services at Fukuoka City International Center

Legal Counseling

March 6th and 17th
 April 3rd and 21st

Date and Time
 1st Saturday 10:30 ~ 13:30
 3rd Wednesday 13:00 ~ 16:00

Appointment: Required

Language: An interpreter is available upon request.

Immigration, Residency, and Nationality

March 14th and April 11th

Date and Time
 2nd Sunday 13:00 ~ 16:00
 (Reception until 15:30)

Appointment: Not required

Language: English & Chinese interpreters are available.

Personal (Psychological) Counseling

Date and Time
 Monday 8:45 ~ 17:45
 Tuesday 8:45 ~ 11:45
 Thursday 8:45 ~ 12:45

Appointment: Required

Language: An English speaking professional is available.

Please visit our website at :
<https://www.fcif.or.jp/en/>



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<https://www.facebook.com/fukuokacityinternationalcenter/>

