

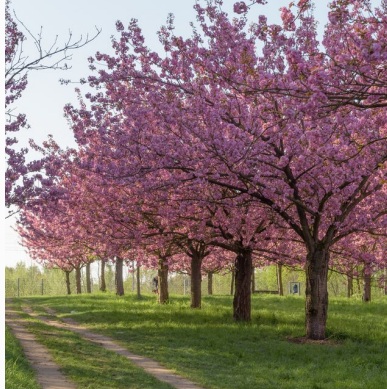
<https://www.countryliving.com/gardening/g3168/cherry-blossoms-facts>

25 Things You Didn't Know About Cherry Blossoms

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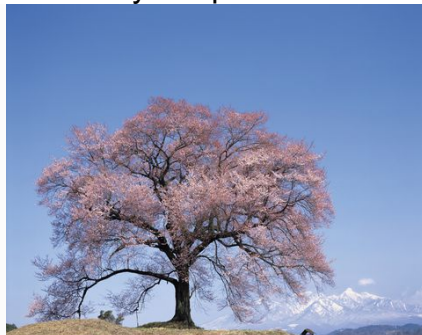
By Rebecca Shinnars



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There's more to these pretty flowers than meets the eye. Blooming cherry blossom trees go hand in hand with the arrival of spring, but have you ever wondered about the history of these pretty pink flowers? Cherry blossoms, which symbolize renewal, have quite the surprising backstory (and even a few special traditions). From where they originated to the significance of cherry blossom festivals, here's everything you need to know.

1. George Washington didn't actually chop down a cherry tree.



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You may have heard the story of America's first president damaging his father's cherry tree with a hatchet as a young boy. When confronted about it, he allegedly confessed and said, "I cannot tell a lie." While it's an admirable anecdote about honesty, this is actually a myth made up by one of George Washington's biographers, Mason Locke Weems.

2. Cherry trees have a short lifespan.



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Typically, they only last about 16-20 years. But certain species have a much longer life expectancy. Black cherry trees, for example, can live up to 250 years.

3. You can get arrested in Washington DC for breaking off a blossom.



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Yep, think again before you decide to pluck one of these pink beauties. Removing a blossom is viewed as vandalism of federal property in Washington, D.C., which can lead to a citation or even arrest.

4. Ornamental cherry trees have the Latin name *prunus*.



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This branch of trees is largely for looks as opposed to fruit production. Ornamental blossoms do still generate fruit, but it's so sour that only animals eat it.

5. One Dutch municipality gave 400 cherry blossoms names.



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The Japan Women's Club donated 400 cherry blossoms to Amstelveen in 2000. From there, 200 of the trees were given Japanese names, and the remaining 200 received Dutch names.

6. The flower petals are edible.



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In fact, you can salt them and add them to treats such as cookies, cakes, and jellies, pickle them to use as a garnish, or buy them prepared and brew traditional Japanese sakura tea with them.

7. Cherry blossoms are Japan's national flower.



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Known as "sakura" in Japanese, these pale blooms are a symbol of more than just spring—they stand for renewal and hope.

8. Cherry blossom ice cream is a real thing.



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The Japanese love cherry blossoms so much, they've turned them into an ice cream flavor.

9. Picnicking beneath cherry blossom trees is a Japanese tradition.



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The century-old custom is known as "hanami," which means flower viewing. Early scripture hints that the tradition began with emperors and members of the Imperial Palace.

10. In Washington DC, peak bloom is usually around April 4.



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Defined as the day when 70 percent of Toshino cherry trees are open, peak bloom varies each year with the mean date April 4 in Washington, D.C. The blooming period can last up to 14 days.

11. Cherry trees can be huge.



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An average Japanese cherry tree is around 25 feet tall, while some can grow to 50 feet tall with a 40-foot wide canopy. With some TLC, these trees can reach 75 feet in their native habitat.

12. "Hanami" picnics are arguably more spectacular at night.



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For these late-night picnics, known as "yozakura," the Japanese hang paper lanterns in cherry blossom trees to illuminate them.

13. Cherry blossom festivals celebrate more than just spring.



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It's likely that you've been to a cherry blossom festival before. According to the National Cherry Blossom Festival in D.C., the flower is celebrated as a symbol for the friendship between Japan and the U.S.

14. U.S. cherry blossom trees date back to 1912.



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Japan sent the trees to the U.S. to represent friendship and goodwill. In 1915, we reciprocated by sending flowering dogwood trees to Japan.

15. Japan had tried to send over cherry blossoms once before.



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In 1910, U.S. inspectors from the Department of Agriculture recommended burning this gift from the Japanese after finding insects and diseases in the trees. According to *Washingtonian*, this nearly caused a diplomatic crisis.

16. Bloom predictions can't be made too far in advance.



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Want to catch cherry blossoms in all their glory? You'll want to wait until March, when bloom predictions are made, to plan your trip.

17. They make up the best-selling fragrance in the U.S.



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The top perfume in the U.S. at one point was Bath and Body Works' Japanese Cherry Blossom. Thirty million units of the mixture of cherry blossoms, crisp pears, mimosa petals, and sweet sandalwood are sold each year.

18. In Japan, this is the most iconic view of cherry blossoms.



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The image, cherry blossoms framing Mount Fuji, is a common postcard view, thanks to its lake-surrounded location.

19. In the U.S., we most often associate cherry blossoms with our nation's capital.



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National landmarks surrounded by spring flowers attract visitors to Washington, D.C.'s Tidal Basin each spring.

20. Neither D.C. nor Japan hold the title of "Cherry Blossom Capital of the World."



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Rather, it's Macon, Georgia, which is home to 300,000-plus Yoshino cherry blossom trees. While these trees obviously are not native to the South, William A. Fickling Sr., a local realtor, discovered one in his own backyard in 1949. On a business trip to Washington, D.C., he learned more about cherry blossoms and sought to bring more to his hometown.

21. Cherry blossoms are said to be native to the Himalayas.



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According to the *Huffington Post*, these flowers likely originated somewhere in Eurasia before migrating to Japan.

22. There are 200 different varieties of cherry blossom.



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In Japan, the most popular variety is "Somei Yoshino." In the U.S., mainly Yoshino hybrids line the Tidal Basin, National Mall, and Potomac waterfront.

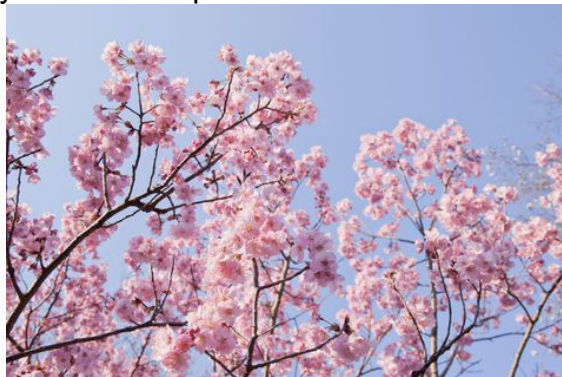
23. They aren't always pink.



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The Takesimensis variety, known for its white flowers, is actually more common than you might think in the U.S. Other blossoms change colors throughout the blooming period, such as Ukon, which go from greenish yellow to white before turning pink.

24. Each tree may only bloom for up to a week.



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While cherry blossom season usually lasts about a month, from the time the first to the last tree blooms, each individual tree may only flower for about a week. Trees usually live for 30 to 40 years.

25. You don't have to travel to Washington D.C. to see them in the U.S.



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While D.C. is one of the most popular places to travel during Cherry Blossom season, you can also see the pretty pink blooms at the following locations: around Boston's Charles River, the Capitol Mall in Salem, Oregon, the Cherry Blossom Walk in Nashville, Branch Brook Park in Newark, NJ, the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis, the University of Washington in Seattle, the Dallas Arboretum, and throughout several orchards in the Traverse, Michigan area.