

Happy *Hanami* Everyone!

The cancellation of our cherished Cherry Blossom Festival this year is disappointing, but it has also created a chance to celebrate the sakura in a more authentically Japanese way. *Hanami* (*hana*=flower, *mi*=see: *hunna-mee*) is the quintessential Japanese experience of spring.



Early in the season, the weather report on Japanese TV starts to include the "cherry blossom front" as trees begin to flower up the country. The news creates an intense bow wave of anticipation as viewers follow the progress north and eagerly calculate when their local trees will burst into flower.

In ancient days aristocrats would walk under the blooming trees, enjoying the tranquility and beauty, composing poetry. Modern Japanese, however, will picnic. They take out their big blue plastic tarps, pack a picnic lunch, and haul out to the nearest park with the kids. On finding a good spot under the trees they shake out the tarp, take off their shoes, and prepare to relax under the spreading branches with sushi and green tea. Some parks allow alcohol so a six-pack of beer or a couple of one-cup sake jars may be quietly downed. If a falling petal lands in your cup it is seen as good luck and as the blossoms cluster so thickly, this is a highly probable event.



Hanami has a long history in Japan and the sakura have a powerful grip on the cultural imagination. The fragility and brevity of the blossoms speak to the Buddhist concept of the transience of life, and by extension it is also associated, somewhat nationalistically, with fallen soldiers, of young lives cut short in noble sacrifice. The melancholic symbolism aside, however, *hanami* is basically a joyous celebration of spring and new beginnings.

Learn about the many varieties of sakura trees, and get more instruction in the art of hanami here:

<https://www.japan-guide.com/sakura>

Learn more about the fascinating 1,000-year-old history of *hanami* here:

<https://japanthis.com/2017/04/04/history-of-hanami>

Wishing you happy *hanami* in Miyazu Japanese Gardens.

