

JAPAN NOTES



NOTE 28 SUMMER 2012



Page 1	Page 2	Page 3	Page 4	Page 5	Page 6
Japan-U.S. Cherry Blossom Centennial	Japanese Garden Curator Awarded by Japanese Government	Seiwa-en and Japanese Festival	A Discussion about Haruki Murakami	Popular Summer Recipe Popular Japanese Proverbs	JAS 2012 Event Calendar



Twenty Young Cherry Trees Dedicated to Missouri Botanical Garden Centennial Celebration of Gift to America from Japan

On April 22nd, under somewhat threatening grey clouds, a young cherry tree was planted in the Missouri Botanical Garden near the beautiful pond in Seiwa-En by four men representing Japan, America and the Garden. The tree was one of hundreds of cherry trees dedicated to the U.S.A. from Japan as the commemoration of the gift of cherry trees one hundred years ago. The gift at that time was a symbol of the endeavoring efforts in restoration of the friendship between Japan and America that was going down a slippery slope.

At this auspicious event, Consul General Okamura also announced that Mr. Ben Chu who has been in charge of Seiwa-En for many years had been awarded the Japan's Foreign Minister's Commendation for his outstanding work in keeping the Japanese Garden as such a beautiful and wonderful place.

Japan-U.S. Cherry Blossom Centennial

Consul General Yoshifumi Okamura



Good afternoon. I am delighted to join you for this very special Cherry Tree planting. The cherry tree we are going to plant today will join the 19 trees that have recently been planted here at the Missouri Botanical Garden. I am most grateful that the Garden welcomed this wonderful idea and offered the perfect location for the cherry trees.



My deepest appreciation goes to the Missouri Botanical Garden. It is a very special place for our Japan-Missouri partnership. It hosts one of the largest Japanese festivals in the United States each September. It is home to the largest traditional Japanese garden in North America. And in 1994, Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan planted a Japanese maple tree that stands by the Stone Boat Basin. I am delighted that many trees here have deep roots in Japan.

I wish to applaud the Japan America Society of St. Louis for all of its hard work in organizing the Japanese Festival and bringing the best of Japan to this city. I would also like to thank Mr. Bruce Buckland, our Honorary Consul General of Japan

here. He has done so much for our Japan-Missouri friendship, and he has helped bring these cherry trees to St. Louis. Another person has made an important contribution as well. I will say more about Mr. Ben Chu, Horticulture Supervisor of this garden, a little later.

The trees commemorate the 100th anniversary of the gift of cherry trees to Washington, D.C. Each spring, the 3,750 trees along the Tidal Basin transform this nation's capital, and over one million people enjoy the beautiful blossoms.

Cherry trees are very special to us. In Japan, the school year begins in April, and the trees bloom in late March or early April. I remember on my very first day of school, I wore a new uniform and carried a new backpack, and my mother brought me there. Cherry tree blossoms were everywhere. Most Japanese share this wonderful memory



(cont'd) of their first school day. So to the Japanese people, sakura symbolizes a fresh start filled with hope and expectation.

About 100 years ago, there was an American woman named Eliza Scidmore. She visited Japan many times during more than 40 years, and often joined her brother, who served as Consul General in Yokohama. As a talented travel writer, Ms. Scidmore wrote all about the Japanese people and culture. She really loved Japanese gardens and especially, sakura trees. She wished to have the wonderful trees planted in America, and she worked very hard over many years to realize her dream.

At the time, Japan and Russia were at war. Japan was much smaller than Russia, but managed to defeat the Russian navy. Still, the outcome of the war was in doubt. Then President Theodore Roosevelt intervened. He led the way for Japan and Russia to conclude a peace treaty that proclaimed Japan to be the victor. Tokyo Mayor Yukio Ozaki was so grateful that he wanted to say "thank you" to the U.S. in a big way.

The visions of Mayor Ozaki and Ms. Scidmore came together, and more than 3,000 cherry trees were gifted to Washington. It was a splendid idea, because one century lat-

er, the gift continues to embrace the arrival of spring with spectacular blossoms, and brings much joy to everyone who sees them. It is a tremendous symbol of our Japan-U.S. partnership. It demonstrates Japan's sincerest appreciation for our deep-rooted friendship 100 years ago and today.



Thirteen months ago, the Great East Japan Earthquake took place. It was a huge tragedy, but at the same time it reminded us that our Japan-U.S. relationship is strong and deep.

The United States has been at the forefront in providing relief with the U.S. military's Operation Tomodachi. St. Louis and Missouri quickly stepped forward. The Japan America Society of St. Louis raised over \$13,000 for the relief effort. Many organizations in this city and state

contributed much-needed funds. Japan fully knows that we share a special bond of friendship. Your outpouring of support deeply moved the Japanese people. We will always remember it.

Ladies and gentlemen, Japan is now coming back from the earthquake, and it will be a stronger and better nation. Our Japan-Missouri friendship will only grow stronger and closer. The Japanese cherry trees will be a lasting symbol of our special bond for generations to come.

Japanese Garden Curator Awarded by Japanese Government



Consul General Yoshifumi Okamura & Benjamin Chu

Benjamin Chu, Horticulture Supervisor and Japanese Garden Curator of the Missouri Botanical Garden, was awarded a Commendation from The Minister of Foreign Minister of Japan for his outstanding work .

Consul General Yoshifumi Okamura handed the Commendation to Mr. Ben Chu on April 22nd when he came to the Garden for the Centennial Celebration of the Gift of Cherry Trees from Japan to the U.S.

This is what he said of Mr. Chu.

"As we look across this wonderful Japanese Garden, we have Mr. Ben Chu to thank for its beauty. I am delighted to announce that he has been awarded the Foreign Minister's Commendation for his out-

standing work with the Japanese cherry trees here. Mr. Chu has also done much to bring Japanese gardens here. He has taught adult education classes, including one on Japanese Garden Design, and he has consulted on and designed Japanese gardens in the Midwest and elsewhere.

In Ben's expert hands, I really expect that in several years, the sakura trees will produce beautiful pinkish blossoms for all to enjoy on a bright spring day like today.

Mr. Chu, it is my great pleasure to present the Foreign Minister's Commendation to you."



Seiwa-en and Japanese Festival

Jack Coad and Shibusawa Yoshiaki

At the Missouri Botanical Garden, almost 38 years ago, on Tuesday, September 24, 1974, three dignitaries broke ground for construction of the future Japanese garden. They were Director Peter Raven of the Garden, Mayor John H. Poelker of St. Louis and Mayor Setsuji Iwamoto of Suwa, Japan (the Sister City of St. Louis). Among the distinguished guests present was President Koichi Kawana of Design Associates Inc., of Los Angeles, one of the leading architects in design of Japanese gardens in the U.S. He was selected in 1972 to design the Japanese Garden by the St. Louis Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL).



When World War II ended many Japanese Americans, who had been up-rooted from their west coast homes and businesses and placed in internment camps, chose to settle down in St. Louis because of the friendly and helpful hands of the people here. St. Louis private families, educational institutions, and

business and corporate communities gave the Japanese Americans the opportunities to regain their life. In appreciation of their reception in the St. Louis community, members of the JACL decided to give the people of St. Louis a Japanese garden as a token of appreciation.



When the Garden Committee of JACL approached Dr. Peter Raven of the Missouri Botanical Garden he proposed a 14 acre site. Dr. Raven envisioned this new Japanese Garden not only as a bridge between Japan and America, but also as an art of gigantic sculpture that would enrich people's lives. Today, the Japanese Garden named Seiwa-En (Garden of Purity and Harmony) is perhaps the largest and the finest of all the Japanese gardens in North America. Other groups offering support were the City of Suwa, Japan, the St. Louis Chapter of Ikebana International and the National Council of State Garden Clubs.

Hence, it was quite natural that the Japanese Festival found its home in The Missouri Botanical Garden in 1977. Since then, due to successful collaborative efforts of the Garden, the Japanese American Citizens League, Japan America Society and local Japanese American and Japanese groups the Garden has hosted this event annually. In 1993 the Japanese Activity Committee (JAC) was established as a consolidation of these Japanese related organizations to facilitate working with the Garden staff in planning and producing the Japanese Festival. In recent years the Festival has been held over the Labor Day

weekend in September and it has become the largest and most comprehensive Japanese festival in America, attracting between 30,000 and 50,000 thousand of people, depending the weather.



A Discussion about Haruki Murakami (村上 春樹)

JASWA's book club pick for April was the controversial Japanese modern writer and translator Haruki Murakami. According to internet information, this post World War II baby boomer, he was born in 1949, whose humorous and surreal literary works focus on themes of alienation and loneliness has been praised as one of the world's greatest living novelists but often criticized by Japan's literary establishment.

Here are two opinions from this discussion about Haruki Murakami that were most interesting.



What's so great about Haruki Murakami?

Well, we aren't sure! Dr. Marvin Marcus, professor of Japanese literature at Washington University, led the discussion of Murakami at a March 27th event, but admitted he was not fond of his work. Only one person in the audience really enjoyed Murakami although several others thought he was "interesting" or "okay." Most will admit that the author is very creative and good at making the reader feel a sense of his characters' alienation and that life just happens. Dr. Marcus said Murakami is in a special class of his own, just as Charles Dickens is—when you read it you know who wrote it. The "boku" main male characters tend to be passive, aimless and likeable, and have flashes of insight. Dr. Marcus speculated that perhaps Murakami's worldwide popularity is due to the Western influences in his stories—especially food and jazz. Even though they are set in Japan, his narratives do not seem particularly Japanese.

At the April meeting of JASWA's book club, we had fun discussing Professor Marcus's presentation, analyzed Murakami's "After Dark," and talked about other Murakami novels we had read.

—Linda Austin and Carol Mock, JASWA



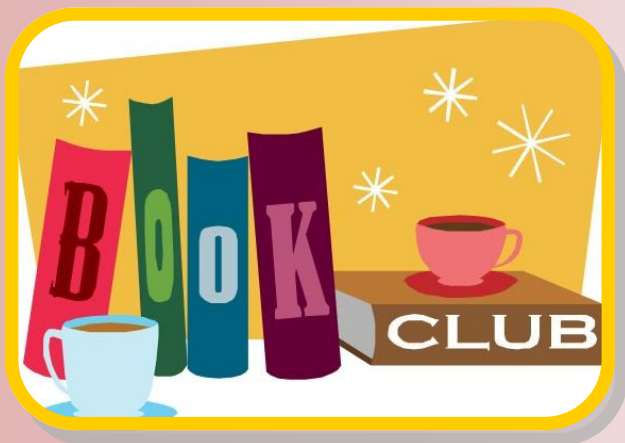
Murakami is a little like Richard Brautigan—ironic, but lightly ironic, and rarely bitter. Also like Brautigan, Murakami is comic, but in an understated way. He never goes for belly laughs. In fact, Murakami has admitted to an interest in Brautigan and you can feel the Brautigan influence in the early books. But Murakami has a little more bite to him. Think of the violence in *Windup Bird Chronicle*—his most accomplished work. The *Windup Bird Chronicle* also shows that Murakami can tackle weighty topics. That book is (mostly) about the Pacific War. Rarely has the fog of war—the chaos and senselessness of it when seen from close up—been made so vivid as in this book.

Who else would have thought of writing about a zoo keeper in Manchuria with the Russians closing in and the occupying Imperial Army withdrawing in confusion?

Murakami is skillful in the way he treats the supernatural as something perfectly ordinary. A man gets in a cab in Tokyo and the cab driver, it develops as they make their way through the city, is a vampire. A man gets up, washes his face, eats his breakfast, and goes to work—at an elephant factory. Murakami's book about factories (*hi izuru kuni no kojou*) was not bad, but I'm not a big fan of his non-fiction as a whole. His oral history of the sarin gas subway attack was disappointing—the introduction was pedestrian for starters. But the novels: one virtuoso performance after another!

I know some people feel his Japanese 'sounds' un-Japanese, as though it were a translation from English. I'm not qualified to say since I'm not a native speaker but I certainly don't FEEL that way when I read him. I wonder if the abundant references to jazz and Western food throw people off a little, perhaps? He sounds a lot like Ryu Murakami or Shuichi Yoshida to me, with more references to Western pop culture.

—Larry Holyoke, JAS & JAC



Popular Summer Recipe— Somen Noodles

Somen (素麺) are very thin, white Japanese noodles made of wheat flour. They taste similar to udon noodles or a light flour based noodle, however somen noodles are usually cooked hot and served cold. In the summer, somen chilled with ice is a popular meal to help stay cool.

Yield: Serves 4 **Total Time:** 15 minutes



Ingredients:

- 14 oz. dried somen noodles
- 1/2 teaspoon grated or minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon grated ginger
- 1/4 cup Japanese soy sauce
- 1/4 cup mirin or rice wine vinegar
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon chili paste, chili garlic sauce or chili flakes
- green onions for garnish
- water to dilute the sauce if it's too salty (optional)
- steamed vegetables (optional)
- grilled meat (optional)



Directions:

1. Cook somen noodles according to package. Drain and set aside. Place a few ice cubes in the bowl and water if desired.
2. In medium bowl, combine rest of sauce ingredients: garlic, ginger, soy sauce, mirin, sesame oil and chili paste/sauce/flakes. Add additional teaspoons of water to dilute the sauce if it's too salty.
3. When ready to serve, dress sweet soy-ginger sauce over somen noodles.

Popular Japanese Proverbs

晴天の霹靂 (Seiten no heki-reki)

Literally: Thunderclap from a clear sky.

Meaning: A bolt from the blue. / A complete surprise.



竜頭蛇尾 (ryuudou dabi)

Literally: dragon, head, snake, tail

Meaning: Anticlimax, the beginning is like a dragon's head, great and majestic and the ending is like a snake's tail, tiny and pathetic.



弱肉強食 (jaku niku kyō shoku)

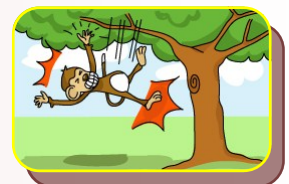
Literally: The weak are meat; the strong eat.

Meaning: Survival of the fittest.

猿も木から落ちる。 (Saru mo ki kara ochiru)

Literally: Even monkeys fall from trees.

Meaning: Everyone makes mistakes. / Nobody's perfect.



二兎を追う者は一兎をも得ず。 (Nito wo ou mono wa itto wo mo ezu)

Literally: One who chases after two hares won't catch even one.

Meaning: Trying to do two things at once



Japan America Society of St. Louis
2012 Event Calendar

January 8	Shinnenkai (New Year Celebration), Sushi Club/JAS
February 7	Kimono Day: "Luncheon with Watanabe Duo's Music" at 12:00 Noon, Westborough Country Club (hosted by JASWA & JAS)
February 14	JCI Operation Hope (Update on Tohoku) by Edson Kodama, JCI Secretary General, 331 SSB
February 26	Chanoyu Presentation (Japanese Tea Ceremony) with Junko Ikeda, Juneshin-An (chashitsu), St. Charles
March 18	Chanoyu (Japanese Tea Ceremony) with Junko Ikeda
March 27	Haruki Murakami lecture by Dr. Marcus at St. Louis County Library
April 15	Chanoyu (Japanese Tea Ceremony)
April 22	Japan-U.S. Cherry Blossom Centennial: Sakura Tree Dedication, MBG
April 28	JAS Night at the Ballet: Swan Lake (8 pm, Touhill)
May 6	Chanoyu (Japanese Tea Ceremony)
May 20	Sake Tasting at Nobu's (cancelled)
June 10	Chanoyu (Japanese Tea Ceremony)

Upcoming Events

July & August

Summer Ikebana Workshop

- Sunday, June 17 (2:30-4:00 pm): "Shoka Shofutai – Classic style"
- Sunday, June 24 (2:30-3:45 pm): "Shoka shofutai Nishu-Ike"
- Wednesday, July 11 (5:30-6:45 pm): "Shoka Shimputai"
- Saturday, July 14 (2:30-3:45 pm): "Shoka Shimputai"
- Wednesday, August 8 (5:30-7:00 pm): "Moribana"
- Sunday, August 12 (2:30-3:45 pm): "Moribana"

July & August

Summer Sushi Club Meetup

- Tuesday, June 26 (5:45 pm) at Nobu's (8643 Olive Blvd)
- Thursday, July 12 (5:45 pm) at Tokyo Buffet (8004 Olive Blvd)
- Tuesday, August 7 (6:45 pm) at Sushi Sen (Lake St. Louis)
- Sunday, August 26 at Wasabi Five (5:00 pm) (9983 Manchester Rd.)

September — December

Fall Chanoyu (Japanese Tea Ceremony)

September 16, October 14, November 11, and December 16

September — December

Fall Ikebana workshop (Japanese Flower Arrangement)

- Sunday, September 9 (2:30-3:45 pm): "Shoka shofutai"
- Sunday, October 7 (2:30-3:45 pm): "Shoka Shimputai"
- Sunday, October 28 (2:30-3:45 pm): "Moribana"
- Saturday, November 10 (2:30-3:45 pm): Arrangement for Thanksgiving Holiday
- Saturday, December 15 (2:30-3:45 pm): "Free style" for Christmas Season

September 1-3

Japanese Festival, Missouri Botanical Garden

September 5

JAS 2012 Fund Raising Golf Outing for the Japanese Language School for Children,
Pevely Farms

September 27

Shibusawa-Arai Professorship of Japanese Studies, Dr. Shawn Bender on Taiko

November

Film event with JASWA?

November 8

JAS Annual Dinner

December (TBA)

JAS Night at the Ballet: The Nutcracker