



Greeting from the Consul General of Japan April 2025

Welcome to the 50th Annual Seattle Cherry Blossom & Japanese Cultural Festival! What began over a century ago as a simple gesture of friendship between Japan and the United States has since blossomed into hundreds of thousands of *sakura* trees now planted across America. Today, these beloved cherry blossoms are recognized as a symbol of Japan's commitment to international friendship.

Seattle's own connection to *sakura* dates back to 1929, when 3,500 cherry trees were planted in Seward Park. In 1960, Crown Prince Akihito planted a cherry tree in the Japanese Garden at the Washington Park Arboretum. This tree, later known as the "Emperor's Cherry Tree," was relocated to Seattle Center in 1975. The following year, to commemorate America's Bicentennial, Prime Minister Takeo Miki gifted 1,000 cherry trees to the city of Seattle. These trees can still be enjoyed today along Seward Park Boulevard. In gratitude for this generous gift, the first Seattle Cherry Blossom & Japanese Cultural Festival was held at Seward Park in 1976. The festival later moved to Seattle Center, and to preserve the legacy of the Emperor's Cherry Tree, a scion was successfully grafted and planted next to Fisher Pavilion, now the heart of the Seattle Cherry Blossom & Japanese Cultural Festival.

Over the past fifty years, this festival has served as a vibrant platform to celebrate and promote Japanese culture in the Pacific Northwest through captivating performances, educational programs, and interactive activities. A highlight of this year's festival will be the debut of Seattle's first-ever international sumo tournament. Visitors can also look forward to an art exhibition featuring Japan-inspired works by local artists, along with the return of festival favorites such as music and dance performances, hands-on cultural activities, and delicious food and beverages for all to enjoy.

I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation and congratulations to the members of the Seattle Cherry Blossom & Japanese Cultural Festival Committee, all participating organizations, and the many dedicated volunteers. Your unwavering commitment ensures that the friendship between Japan and the United States remains strong, and that Japanese culture continues to flourish in this region for the next fifty years and beyond.



Sincerely,

IYORI Makoto

Consul General of Japan in Seattle

Honorary Co-Chair, Seattle Cherry Blossom & Japanese Cultural Festival Committee