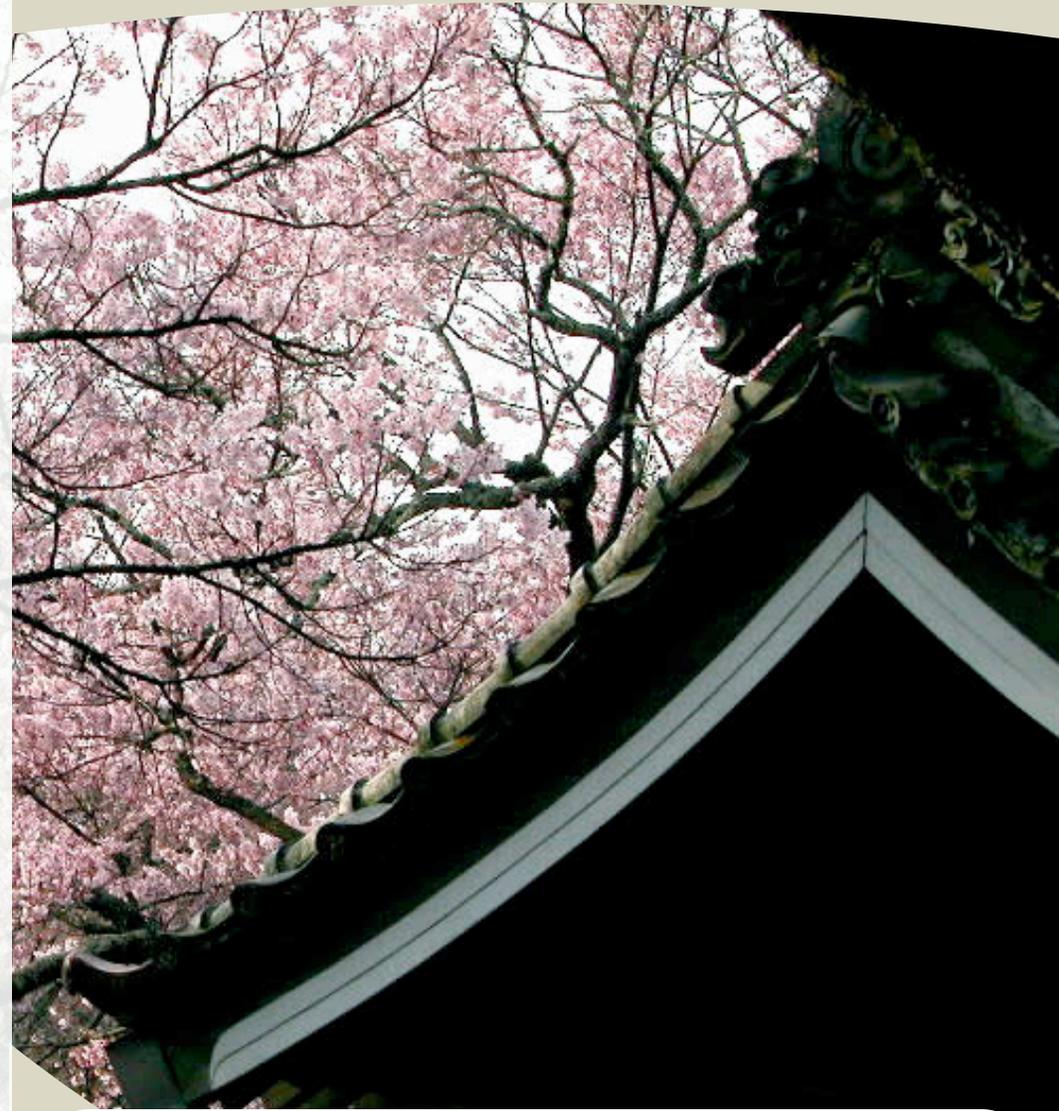




This event is sponsored by

- Division of Academic Affairs
- Division of Student Affairs
- Division of Adult and Continuing Education
- Education and Language Acquisition Department
- Asian Heritage Celebration 2012 Planning Committee
- Student Advisory Council (SAC)

Special thanks to the Consulate General of Japan in New York for their support



日米桜百周年

THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF THE GIFT OF
SAKURA (CHERRY) TREES FROM JAPAN TO THE U.S.

Date : April 24, 2012 1pm-2pm

Place : Courtyard and Poolside Cafe

Program

1. Welcome remark
2. Introduction of the centennial celebration of the sakura trees from Japan to the U.S. and Mr. Torajiro Watase
3. President Gail Mellow, LaGuardia CC
4. Ambassador/Consul-General Shigeyuki Hiroki
5. Ribbon cutting & planting of the new sakura trees
6. Gift of the 1,000 origami cranes
7. Commemorative photos

History of the Sakura Tree in New York

In 1912, over 5,000 sakura (cherry) trees were gifted from Japan to the U.S. as a symbol of lasting friendship between the two countries. Over 3,000 trees from the City of Tokyo to the City of Washington, D.C. and 2,000 from the Committee of Japanese Residents of New York to New York City were sent. Since that time, Japanese organizations have made gifts of cherry trees to America to promote friendship between Japan and the United States.

The 2,000 sakura trees given to NY were a replacement for an earlier gift from Japan for the Hudson-Fulton Celebration in 1909, which commemorated the 100th anniversary of Robert Fulton's demonstration of his steam-powered boat on the Hudson River and the 300th anniversary of Henry Hudson's discovery of the Hudson River. Unfortunately, the tree saplings in 1909 were destroyed due to infestation with insects and nematodes.

The new shipment arrived in New York in 1912 and they were planted in Sakura Park, located on the Upper West side of Manhattan. For more information on the history of the sakura tree in NYC, visit the City of New York Parks and Recreation website at <http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/M087/history>

Sakura and LaGuardia Community College

Prof. Eiko Fukuda who teaches World History at LaGuardia Community College, is the great grand-daughter of Mr. Torajiro Watase, who made a significant contribution to the gift of the sakura trees in 1912. Mr. Watase was a member of The Honorary Commercial Commission of Japan to the USA in 1909, headed by Mr. Eiichi Shibusawa (known as "father of Japanese capitalism" in the 19th and early 20th century). Mr. Watase was the owner of Tokyo Konoen, an agricultural machines and supply company. His agricultural specialities and his meticulous research about geology in the U.S. was an indispensable key to the successful afforestation of sakura trees in the U.S.

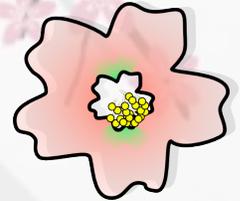


About the Sakura (Cherry Blossom) Tree

Sakura is the Japanese word for the cherry blossom tree, the most beloved spring flower in Japan. The history of sakura can be traced back to the Heian period (794-1185) in Japan. A large number of classic Japanese poems (such as Tanka and Haiku) have been produced addressing the transient beauty of Sakura blossom. In Japanese culture, sakura is a symbol of a new beginning since the academic year in Japan starts in April when the cherry blossoms burst into blossom.

Even now, hanami (flower-viewing) is still a popular social event in spring in Japan. Families and friends gather and picnic under fully-blossomed Sakura trees. After the long and bleak winter, hanami heralds the arrival of spring, a warm and beautiful season filled with flowers across Japan.

The Japanese are mesmerized by sakura not only for its beauty but also for the evanescent nature of its petals. The full blossom usually lasts only one week or so in spring -- this transience creates a feeling of what Japanese call mono-no aware, a deep realization of the transient nature of life -- an irony that we all know that beauty never lasts forever and a fate that real beauty like sakura is short-lived in our world.



Sakura trees in Sakura Park, NY

Locations of Sakura Trees in New York

The original gift of sakura trees to New York City was planted in Sakura Park (122nd Street and Riverside Drive) in 1912 and you can still see some remnant there. Brooklyn Botanic Garden (900 Washington Avenue) celebrates the cherry-blossom season in late April every year. This year's Sakura Matsuri: Cherry Blossom Festival will be held on Saturday April 28 and Sunday April 29, 2012. Relatively unknown to the public, the cherry blossom can also be spotted in spring in Central Park. Near the Bridle Path at 90th Street and along the East Drive at 66th Street are the Yoshino tree, a kind of sakura trees, that is a favorite in Japan.



Mr. Torajiro Watase

By Prof. Hana Masters

Commissioned by the Mayor of Tokyo, Yukio Ozaki, to select the cherry saplings that were sent from Japan to the United States, Torajiro Watase was a turn of the century Tokyo councilman, educator, agronomist and business owner.

Born in Yedo, Japan in 1859, to a samurai's daughter and a retainer of the Bakufuku government, Mr. Watase was raised by predominately by his mother after his father passed away at a young age (Mochizuki, 1909). His mother ensured that her son had an excellent education beginning early on his life.

In 1875, Watase moved to Tokyo to study at the Tokyo English School, a prep-school for Tokyo Kaiaei School (Mochizuki, 1909). During this period Japan was researching ways to institute industrial agricultural practices particularly in areas that they were seeking to colonize.

In 1876, Count Kuroda, the mayor of Hokkaido, invited Mr. William Smith Clark, the president of the Massachusetts Agricultural College, an American agriculturalist, and educator, to come to Hokkaido to help establish the Sapporo Agricultural College, now known as Hokkaido University (Maki, 1996). That very same year, Mr. Torajiro Watase, fluent in English and top of his class, applied and was accepted into agriculture program.

From 1876 to 1887 Mr. Watase studied under the tutelage Mr. Clark, where he learned how to incorporate Western agriculture practices and industrial standards and Western Christian ethics (Maki, 1996). He graduated from the agricultural program in 1880, with high honors (Watase, 1934).



Mr. Torajiro Watase



From the U.S. National Arboretum:
Inspection of Cherry Tree

After graduating, Watase served in the Industrial Bureau of Hokkaido Administration as an officer. During this time Watase helped establish important farming practices and standards which were implemented in the colonies in Hokkaido.

In 1892, he established Knyen, a company in Akasaka. He began to supply as well as distribute the best seeds for farming, selecting breeds he knew would flourish the most. In addition to this, Mr. Watase also sold machinery and taught agricultural methods to the surrounding community. He began to export Japanese fruit trees and flowering trees (Mochizuki, 1909).

In 1910, two thousand sakura (cherry blossom) trees were donated by the Japanese government as gifts to the United States. At the time, Yukio Ozaki, the Mayor of Tokyo wrote, "I always wanted to show, in some way, appreciation to the government of the United States for their kindness shown to Japan during the Russo-Japanese war. When I heard that Mrs. Taft was interested in planting Japanese flowering cherry trees in Washington, I took the liberty to send the trees as a gift from the city of Tokyo" (Samuels, 2005). As a result Mr. Watase helped select the specific breed of Sakura tree that he knew would flourish the most in Washington's climate.

The first gift unfortunately was diagnosed with several fungi and non-native parasites - as a result the U.S. government was forced to destroy them (McClellan, 2005).

With his specialized knowledge and ties in the agricultural community, Watase was able to help coordinate and select the next gift of Cherry Trees in 1912. These trees, carefully monitored - doused in pesticides and fungicides, were shipped into California. From there the trees were loaded onto special freighters which then brought them into Washington D.C. where they were planted.



From the U.S. National Arboretum:
Arrival of the Cherry Tree

This year, LaGuardia celebrates the Centennial Anniversary of the Cherry Blossom Gifts with the planting of cherry blossom trees on LaGuardia's campus. LaGuardia shares an important tie to the historical gifts of sakura trees right here on campus! Prof. Eiko Fukuda who teaches World History at LaGuardia Community College, is the great granddaughter of Mr. Torajiro Watase, a Tokyo councilman, educator, and agriculture specialist, who helped coordinate the gift of the sakura trees in 1909 and 1912 (Mochizuki, 1909).



From the U.S. National Arboretum:
Burning of Cherry Tree

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