

Sakura Returns April 17



Clark College's beloved Sakura Festival returns Thursday, April 17, inviting the community to gather beneath blooming cherry trees in celebration of friendship between cultures. Presented in partnership with the city of Vancouver and the Vancouver Rotary, this free event blends tradition, community, and springtime beauty.

Opening remarks begin at 1 p.m. in the Royce Pollard Japanese Friendship Garden, located next to Beacock Music Hall on Clark's main campus. In case of inclement weather, the event will be inside Gaiser Student Center.

New this year: Hosted by Student Life, there will be a special display and release of a Butterfly Garden. In the Japanese culture, butterflies hold deep symbolic meaning, representing transformation, renewal, and the fleeting beauty of life. They also signify the connection between the physical and natural worlds. Butterfly motifs are often featured in Japanese literature, various art form, textile, and household items, serving as a celebration of beauty, fragility, and harmony with nature.

History of Sakura Festival at Clark College

More than 25 years ago, the City of Vancouver received a gift of friendship: 100 Shirofugen cherry trees from Mr. John Kageyama, President of America Kotobuki in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Washington's statehood. These trees were planted at Clark College, creating an enduring reminder of the bonds between our region and Japan.

Twenty years after the trees were planted, Clark College was bequeathed another generous gift from Dr. Chihiro Kanagawa, CEO of Shin-Etsu to build a Japanese Friendship Garden. At his

request, the garden was named the Royce E. Pollard Japanese Friendship Garden to commemorate former Mayor Pollard's role in promoting international friendship.

Both Royce Pollard and Bob Knight attended the dedication ceremony on April 19, 2012. At the time, Knight was Clark College president, and Pollard was a Clark College trustee. Both men passed away recently. Knight passed in December 2024; Pollard passed in February 2025.

Over the years, those trees have grown and blossomed—as has that friendship, creating traditions like the establishment in 1995 of a sister-city relationship between Vancouver and Joyo, Japan, and our annual Sakura Festival, begun in 2006.

Learn more about the history of the Sakura Festival.



Sakura Schedule

12:50 p.m.— Koto performance by Yukiko Vossen, accompanied by LeeAnn McKenna

1:00 p.m. – Ceremony and greetings from:

- Clark College President Dr. Karin Edwards
- City of Vancouver Mayor Anne McEnerny-Ogle
- Mr. Yuzo Yoshioka, Consul General of Japan
- Clark College student, Nicole Vara, who studied in Japan

1:30 p.m. – Clark College Treble Ensemble performance

1:40 p.m. – Enroute to the Gaiser Student Center, guests are invited to enjoy the Japanese garden and to stop by Anderson Fountain to visit the Student Life Butterfly Garden.

2 p.m. – Butterflies Release, Andersen Fountain Courtyard

- Butterflies hold significant symbolic meaning in

Japanese culture, representing a variety of themes and ideas. Their imagery appears frequently in traditional Japanese art, literature, and aesthetics, embodying various aspects of life, nature, and the human experience.

2 p.m. – Activities, displays and performances, Gaiser Student Center

- Haiku reading by Clark College Japanese Club
- Traditional Japanese Noh performance “Fuji Musume” (Wisteria Maiden)
- Art share by children enrolled in Child and Family Studies program
- Taiko Drum performance by Takohachi Taiko
- Variety of cultural displays and demonstration tables around the room.
- Hand-painted cherry blossom cookies by the college’s Professional Baking & Pastry Arts students.

3:15 p.m. – Event adjourns