

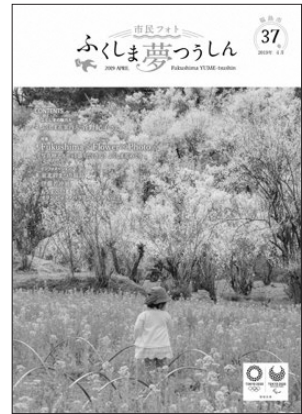
Fukushima Dreams – a quarterly publication of Fukushima City — APRIL 2019

Thank you for picking up this quarters' "Fukushima Dreams – a quarterly publication of Fukushima City".

In this issue, we hope that you will learn more about, and be moved by the various charms that Fukushima City has to offer.

With a population of around 290,000 people, Fukushima is surrounded by the beauty of nature. Due to its location, the city has a characteristic basin climate, and is a famous fruit production area: producing many varieties through the seasons, including cherries, peaches, Asian pears, grapes and apples.

We hope that through this edition, you'll come to appreciate even a little of what Fukushima City has to offer.



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① In a landscape blessed with flowers

Happy encounters continue to inspire

Activities to preserve this nostalgic scenery...

② As spring arrives at Hanamiyama Park, located in the Watari district of Fukushima City, around 70 varieties of flower come into bloom on after the other. The park was originally a flower plantation, established by the first owner, the late Isejiro Abe, in a field in front of his family home. Flowers grew in such profusion that Isejiro, together with his son the late Ichiro Abe, decided to grant free entry to the public, thinking, "If we turn it into a park, everyone will be free to appreciate it." This year Hanamiyama Park is approaching its 60th anniversary. We asked Noriko Kanno, who has acted as a volunteer "Fukushima Flower Guide" for 13 years, about how she has experienced the park's special charm through her activities.

③ A warm welcome inspired by the 2nd owner, Ichiro Abe's spirit of hospitality.

At the height of spring, visitors to Hanamiyama Park can reach a peak of up to 320,000 people. There are 114 volunteer Fukushima Flower Guides who show people around and captivate visitors with their expert knowledge of the park's flowers and trees. Head guide, Noriko Kanno, takes her inspiration from the park's 2nd owner, the late Ichiro Abe. "He used to say, 'Please feel free to look around!' and that generous spirit remains important to me as a Flower Guide."

Another motivating factor for the Flower Guides is the endless opportunity for memorable encounters. "Whether it's bumping into a classmate from 60 years ago in a flurry of falling cherry blossoms, or a happy response to helping someone in a wheelchair, our Flower Guides have unforgettable encounters. We can only think of these experiences as a gift from the flowers that give our work meaning." Four years ago, inspired by such an encounter, a barrier-free "Yuzuriai Course" was constructed to make the park more wheelchair accessible. Thanks to the large numbers of visitors from Japan and overseas, numerous meaningful connections are made at Hanamiyama Park.

60 years since it opened the park is integral to Watari

The wonders/charms of Hanamiyama Park never fail to impress even after repeated visits. Ms. Kanno uses the old Japanese expression, ichi-go, ichi-e – one time one meeting – to express the once in a lifetime scenery created by the park's floral landscape. The owner's occupation is cutting and selling branches of flowers, so the scenery changes every year. "It is the coexistence of the flowers and the owner's day to day living that gives it that special charm."

The Park also includes scenery created by the Flower Guides in cooperation with the 3rd generation owner Kazuo Abe. Close by the "Log House" Tourist Information Office, where the Flower Guides are based, is a field of nanohana flowers (a variety of canola). Some years ago the guides took charge of sowing and tending the field, and it has since become a popular photo spot. The guides also cooperate with the Hanamiyama Tourism Promotion Association and other local groups to preserve the landscape of the Watari area. "I'm delighted that local schoolchildren are involved," says Ms. Kanno. At Watari Elementary School children have lessons on the park's history and 5th year students form a Hanamiyama Support Group, acting as guides in the park. "For local children to appreciate this wonderful place in their hometown, and be proud of it, is an investment in our future," says Ms. Kanno.

This year marks both 60 years since the park was opened and 15 years of the Flower Guides activities. To celebrate, the students of Fukushima Meisei High School have helped to plant a message of thanks in a flower bed at the park's entrance. When spring arrives, this corner of Fukushima City will be blessed with an abundance of flowers. Why not come and enjoy this spectacular floral scenery?

④ A heart-shaped bed of nanohana flowers tended by locals for several years. Seen here from the park's weeping forsythia beds, this heart has become a popular Instagram photo spot.



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① Fukushima × Flower × Photo

Hanamiyama Park is one of many famous and photogenic flower spots in Fukushima City. Here we introduce the best flower spots from spring to early summer. Let's enjoy Fukushima City in full bloom!

② Izaka Onsen – Hanamomo-no-Sato

Tatenoyama, Izaka, Fukushima City

300 flowering peach trees of 40 varieties collected from around the world form a breathtakingly beautiful sight. The deep pink of the blossoms looks lovely against a clear blue sky. There is also a view over the hot spring town of Izaka Onsen.

Best time: mid-April – late May

③ Hanayashiki Park Area

Higashi Shinshakuuchi, Iinomachi, Fukushima City

An amazing landscape of around 8,000 flowering trees and shrubs including peach, forsythia, and camellia, centered on Hanayashiki Park. Outside the park is a strolling path that leads to an observation point with a superb view of the area. Local hospitality during the flowering season includes tea and other refreshments.

Best time: mid-to-late April



Local hospitality during the flowering season includes tea and other refreshments.

④Ohmorijoyama Park Area

82 Honmaru, Ohmori, Fukushima City

This park was developed around the ruins of Ohmori Castle. In early spring 700 cherry trees fill the park with blossoms, and this popular rest area bustles with cherry blossom viewers. During the Sakura Festival period, the trees are illuminated each evening, and the blossoms at night are especially romantic!

Best time: mid-April

⑤Nida-numa

Me-numa, Tsuchiyu Onsen-machi Fukushima City

Nida-numa is a small pond with a 1km circumference where white mizubasho flowers grow en masse, creating a spectacular scene! Just 20 minutes' walk from the Nida-numa Parking Lot is another location where dogtooth violets also bloom en masse!

⑥Tsutsuji-yama Park

Tsutsumi-gataira, Tsuchiyu Onsen-machi, Fukushima City

(A small contribution for the site's upkeep is optional upon entry)

The local people of Tsuchiyu Onsen aimed to make this Japan's top location for maiden lilies. The rolling carpet of pink flowers will surely take your breath away!

Best time: late May - early June

⑦Tsutsumigataira - Himesayuri-no-Sato

Tsutsumigataira, Tsuchiyu-onsen-machi, Fukushima City

(A small contribution for the site's upkeep is optional upon entry)

The local people of Tsuchiyu Onsen aimed to make this Japan's top location for maiden lilies. The rolling carpet of pink flowers will surely take your breath away!

Best time: late May - early June

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①Kumagaiso-no-Sato

Kamakurayama, Mizuhara, Matsukawa-machi, Fukushima City

(A small contribution for the sites' preservation is optional upon entry)

Though rare in Japan, wild lady's slipper orchids grow here in profusion. There are around 5,000 orchids on the mountain slope, and when they flower together, the sight is quite overwhelming! The location is looked after by a local preservation society and is only open during the annual Kumagaiso-no-Sato Festival. A rare spot indeed!

Best time: early-to-late May

②Jorakuen

38 Kohjin, Sakuramoto, Fukushima City

(Adult entry fee: 500 yen, children: 250 yen)

This is an authentic Japanese garden with the Azuma mountain range forming a changing seasonal backdrop. Each season the garden shows a new expression, with cherry blossoms in early April, rhododendrons and ayame iris in May, and in autumn brightly garnished with fall foliage colors. How about leisurely taking photos as you listen to the song of wild birds?

Best time: Early April - late September

③Hydrangeas at Doaidate Park

7 Doaidate, Matsukawa-machi, Fukushima City

Around 5,000 hydrangeas flower in this park. When the sun shines the park is radiant, but when it rains droplets of water on the hydrangeas create a whole new image of beauty!

Best time: late June - mid-July

④Wakuwaku Fukushima Instagram Map Release!

A map featuring the best Instagram spots in Fukushima City, to include pictures from photo contest winners. The map is called "Wakuwaku Fukushima" which means "Exciting Fukushima". Could your exciting pictures of nature, food or drinks in Fukushima be published on this map?!

Photo Contest

To enter, simply post your photo on Instagram. A new winner will be chosen every 3 months and their photo added to the Wakuwaku Fukushima Instagram Map. Why not show us your "Exciting Fukushima"?♪

How to Enter

1. Follow the Instagram account of Fukushima City Tourism Convention at @wakuwaku_fukushima
 2. Tag your photos from Fukushima City with the hashtags: #wakufuku #春のわくふく2019 ※ and add the location.
- Enquiries: Fukushima City Tourism Convention PR Office ☎024-572-5718 (Japanese)

※ Hashtags change with the season. Check the website for details.



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①Cover Image

Nanohana flowers in front of the Flower Guides' Log House. When spring arrives at Hanamiyama Park, this is a very popular photo spot. The flowers are planted and tended by the Flower Guides.

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