

# THE VOICE



(Left and right) The festival organizer is hoping that cold weather may slow down the blooming process for early cherry blossoms.  
TONY SU photos

## Sunshine threatens bloom fest

*Premature budding from warm weather may disrupt cherry tree-inspired events across Vancouver*

By TONY SU

Early blossoms could mean some changes to this year's popular Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival.

Inspired by Vancouver's cherry trees, the festival takes place between April 2 and 29 and features events such as Sakura Days Japan Fair at VanDusen Botanical Garden.

"A lot of people come especially if it's nice out," said Jagdish Atwal, a barista who has worked at Truffles Fine Foods, the cafe at VanDusen, for three years. Atwal said she's seen the event grow over the years.

The founding executive director of the Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival, Linda Poole, said she's worried this year that all the blossoms will be gone

if the beautiful weather persists.

Poole has directed the festival for nine years and she can only recall early blooming once before during the 2010 spring season, although the festival was on hiatus that year because of the Winter Olympic Games.

"The Whitcomb and Accolades [cherry trees] are about three weeks early," said Poole. "So we don't know if the other cultivars are going to also come early."

Poole said she might have to move some of the scheduled festival events earlier, if the trees start to wither in the weeks leading up to April.

Andrew Black, a UBC applied biology professor specializing in agriculture, said early blooming isn't unusual as plants grow faster under the sun.

"[The sun is] really good for warming the soil up, because you're getting the radiation striking the soil surface directly," Black said.

Poole said she's hoping for cold weather in the next few weeks to slow



TONY SU photo

Linda Poole, founder of the Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival.

down the growth, because the last thing she said she wants is to have no cherry blossoms for the festival.

"[The blossoms] may be out for 10 days," she said. "They're the most beautiful when they first come out."

## Seniors get new funding

*A city grant provides temporary support for seniors' programs in Marpole*

By MONA BUTLER

With short-term funding from the City of Vancouver, programs for seniors in the Marpole area are in session again at St. Augustine's Anglican Church.

In December 2013, a flood in the Marpole Place Neighbourhood House forced it to relocate its programs from the old fire hall to the nearby St. Augustine's Church on Hudson Street. By last November, however, money from independent sources ran out.

The city recently gave the neighbouring Marpole Oakridge Family Place a grant to hire an outreach coordinator for four months to review and help organize the displaced seniors' programs, now called the Hudson St. Seniors Hub.

Heather Friday, who has been attending programs at the neighbourhood house for three years, said that the old location had a lot more programs and facilities such as a computer lab and a room for kids to play in.

There were daily programs at the old location but now at St. Augustine's, the majority of the programs run only on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays.

"It took a long time to get things running again," Friday said.

St. Augustine's Rev. Andrew Halladay was part of a committee about homelessness at the neighbourhood house and offered his church hall so that the programs could resume.

"We have about 12 programs running right now," said Halladay. "Among them, a Thursday dinner and a Friday breakfast, a knitting group, an exercise group and a thrift shop in the church basement."

Before, St. Augustine's had a few programs of its own, but was dependent on the number of volunteers.

As far as moving back into the old location goes, Halladay doesn't know what to expect.

"The fire hall is owned by the city. The plans for that are their business and they haven't shared them with us."

## CHERRY Events

### CHERRY JAM DOWNTOWN CONCERT

Time: 12:00 p.m. to 1:20 p.m.  
Date: April 2  
Venue: Burrard station

### SAKURA ILLUMINATION

Time: 9:00 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.  
Date: April 3  
Venue: Sunset Beach Park

### KITE DANCE

Time: 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.  
Date: April 5  
Venue: Vanier Park

Source: [www.vcbf.ca](http://www.vcbf.ca)