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Things to Know About Cherry Blossoms in Vancouver

March 18th, 2015 @ 10:20am (PT) by Rebecca Bollwitt

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Springtime in Vancouver is celebrated every time the wind blows and delicate, fragrant confetti floats down from branches to cover our sidewalks, streets, and lawns. The cherry (and plum) blossoms are here and the puffy pink blossoms are forming pillowy canopies, making it hard to resist taking as many photos as you can while they last.

The [Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival](#) is coming up as well so I thought it would be a good time to share some information about cherry blossoms in Vancouver.

Things to Know About Cherry Blossoms in Vancouver



Where Did They Come From?

"For more than sixty years, Vancouverites have enjoyed a love affair each spring with the soul-stirring flowering plum and cherry trees that line our streets and grace our parks," writes Carol DeFina, Communications Coordinator for the Vancouver Park Board, via the [Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival](#).

"In the 1930s, '40s and '50s, the staff initiated a number of significant cherry tree plantings—provided primarily as gifts to the Park Board. In the early 1930s the mayors of both Kobe and Yokohama presented the Park Board with 500 Japanese cherry trees for planting at the Japanese cenotaph in Stanley Park honouring Japanese Canadians who served in WWI. And so, as the impact of cherry tree plantings began to reshape the city's landscape, Vancouverites were soon smitten by their fleeting beauty, their clouds of blossoms, as they heralded spring's arrival each year.

In 1958 three hundred more cherry trees were donated by the Japanese consul, Muneo Tanabe, reported in the newspaper as "an eternal memory of good friendship between our two nations." The ornamental cherries were planted along Cambie boulevard, between 49th and 33rd Avenues, in Queen Elizabeth Park and around the Japanese monument in Stanley Park."



Plum blossom. Photo credit: [Robyn Hanson](#) on Flickr

How Many Trees Are There?

"By the time the Park Board completed its first comprehensive street tree inventory in 1990, nearly 36 percent of the 89,000 trees on city streets were represented by trees of the Prunus genus—the flowering plum and cherry trees. Of the 479 different classifications of trees identified in the inventory, the most common species was Prunus serrulata 'Kwanzan', the Kwanzan flowering cherry. (12.6 percent) This was followed by Prunus cerasifera, the Pissard plum. (12.4%.

Since that time, Akebono cherries, which seem to display superior performance in our rainy Pacific Northwest climate, have become been much more prevalent in Park Board planting programs. Plums have been de-emphasized due to root problems, though a significant number continue to be added as replacements."

In the 2014 version of the festival's Ornamental Cherries guide, there were an additional 19 cultivars listed, bringing the total to 54 different varieties of flowering cherry trees that can be found in Vancouver neighbourhoods, with over 40,000 individual trees.



Kwanzan. Photo credit: [Rachid H](#) on Flickr

Plum or Cherry?

Many of the early blossoms in March are actually plum, not cherry. Here is [a handy guide](#) to identifying a plum vs cherry blossoms.



Akebono

My favourite. The Akebono is in bloom right now (early March) and has distinctive light pink blossoms, they're the dominant tree at Art Phillips Park/Burrard SkyTrain in Downtown Vancouver:



Akebono. Photo credit: [Lawrence](#) on Flickr

There's also a grove along the Island Park Walk at Granville Island, where I took the top photo for this blog post yesterday.

Cherry Grove

It is believed that the world's first AIDS memorial is in Vancouver, at [Cherry Grove](#) in Coal Harbour. Back in 1985, three family who died of AIDS. Musician [Mark Kleiner](#) told me last year that the Vancouver Park Board had approved a plaque to be installed about this memorial for which he's written a song.



Photo credit: [Rikki / Julius Reque](#) on Flickr

Haiku

Do you love the blossoms so much that you want to write a poem about them? The Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival's [Haiku Invitational](#) is now open for submissions.

subway platform
she brushes cherry petals
from her black umbrella
~ by Garry Eaton from Port Moody, British Columbia

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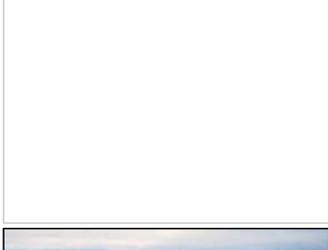
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