

Tsuru 鶴 Soars

Friends of the Gresham Japanese Garden Newsletter



Photo credit: Josh Kulla Photography

Cherry Blossoms Illuminate Gresham

Sakura season brought joy to many visitors. Since March 19, when the Akebono cherry trees reached full bloom, Ebetsu Plaza was filled with people eager to capture the moment.

Our first of two Yozakura Festivals began inside the Kyoudou Center, where a matcha tea demonstration by volunteer Zia Shonk drew a full and appreciative audience.



Macha tea demonstration by Zia Shonk

Later, our volunteers welcomed guests with tea, crackers, perfect weather and picture-

perfect blossoms.

As the sun set and the trees glowed more brilliantly, Amy Shoemaker and Miyuki Sakiyama of Oregon Koto Kai took the stage. The gentle, calming tones of the koto beautifully complemented the cloud-like blossoms surrounding the crowd. As the music carried into the evening, the atmosphere only grew more magical.

Our second event March 28 on another gorgeous evening, an energetic and crowd-favorite performance featuring taiko drums and shamisen by Takohachi Inc welcomed attendees. And once again as night fell and a cool breeze carried blossoms through the air, guests

*Gentle white petals
Against a darkening sky
Half moon glow brightens*

— Ashley, Yozakura guest

settled in to enjoy a 45-minute koto performance by Oregon Koto Kai. A truly magical festival.



Taiko drums reverberate through the jam-packed crowd.

A Labor of Love

During the Edo period (1603 to 1868), happi coats were about function and identification, not celebration. Over time, especially the late Edo and Meiji periods, happi coats became associated with community events and festivals.

For many years, GJG volunteers distinguished themselves at cultural events wearing their working T-shirts. Sue Protz, Activities Director, felt it was time they upped their game and purchase happi coats for volunteers to wear during cultural events.

After researching the cost and designs of pre-made happi coats, a committee decided to design and create their own. The committee, Paula Grech, Maryann Buck, Brenda Ross, and Sue Protz chose the color scheme and stencil design. With Protz's background in design, and three talented volunteer seamstresses, they set to work.

But, after three months of complicated sewing parameters, failed DIY tests, and talks with multiple vendors about the best way to put the design on our

coats, at the last hour, Von Vinhasa with [PromoNinja](#) came to our



rescue, ironically through another vendor Marathon Printing.

The price was within budget, they offered the best technique—silk screening—and they made an unrealistic deadline to have them ready in time for Yozakura.



Left: Paula Grech; right: Maryann Buck wearing their happi coats.

"The happi coats were challenging to make, but knowing they would symbolize unity and the volunteers commitment to the Gresham Japanese Garden's mission, made it a true labor of love."

- Seamstress, Paula Grech



Volunteer Highlight Cheryl Breeden

Cheryl and her husband Gary moved to Gresham in 2022 to be closer to family and granddaughters.

Born and raised in Southern Oregon, Cheryl retired from 15 years in hospitality management. Corporate meetings, weddings and special event planning were her specialty.

On her first visit to Gresham visiting family 10 years ago, Cheryl discovered the magic of Tsuru Island. Now as a volunteer she is able to share this magic and vision of the Garden with visitors. She also offers her skill and time in event planning as the rental coordinator. "It's the best volunteer job I've ever had", said Cheryl.

Cheryl is also an avid hiker, always eager to explore new trails.

Haiku Corner

April 2026

俳句

The spring lingers on
In the scent of a jasmine
In this quiet court.

- Richard Wright

花の陰あかの他人はなかりけり
はなのかげあかのたにんはなかりけり

Hana no kage / aka no tanin wa /
nakari keri

under cherry blossom shade--
no one an utter
stranger

- Issa 1819

Turtle Gets a New Shell



Kamekichi, our beloved turtle, is also getting a makeover. His shell is getting covered with Oregon Boxwood (*Paxistima myrsinites*).

Over time, this native, slow growing evergreen shrub will form a nice airy green mound blanketing his shell.

Volunteer Orientation



Volunteers are the roots of the Garden. We come together every Saturday 9am-noon to beautify our spaces and better the community.

If you are interested, you're welcome to pop in on a Saturday or attend our April 29th Volunteer Orientation, 6-7pm. RVSP to volunteers@greshamjapanesegarden.com.

Unexpected Donors

Some of our readers may know that Sue Protz with the Gresham Japanese Garden assist in the pruning of the many pine trees in the Memorial Healing Garden at Oregon State Penitentiary. She works alongside adults in custody, who throughout their day together, share stories about healing inside the fencing of their Japanese garden.

Knowing that GJG was in the midst of a major renovation of Tsuru Island, the OSP Healing Garden's director offered to fund raise for our cause. We've been deeply moved by this act of kindness knowing that many of the adults in custody earn at most \$27/month. There are 11 clubs sanctioned by the administration of OSP. Of those 11 clubs, 8 of them participated in the fundraising drive.

Additionally, over 200 prisoners made individual donations. Nearly 70% of the prisoners, either through their respective clubs and/or through direct donations, contributed to GJG's renovation project. All together they raised a little over \$2000!

FROM THE GARDEN DIRECTOR

"We are blessed to be the only maximum security in the nation with an exquisite 13-thousand-square-foot Healing

Garden within it. The Japanese garden is a living testament as to how intentionally designed natural spaces can serve as instruments of healing and transformation within the American justice system.

"Through nature, we are recognizing and experiencing the importance of healing. We are also aware that, for years, you and your team at the Gresham Japanese Garden have been helping people heal through the power of nature with your Japanese garden. In this regard, especially, we continue to be grateful for your mentorship. When we venture upon a journey of healing, it inspires us to want to help others heal. To that end, when we learned that you were open to our request to help fund raise for the GJG renovation, we were ecstatic! You have provided us an opportunity to collaborate with you in helping others heal. Through the clubs and individuals, we are recognizing the importance of the need for healing within communities of Oregon. These are the communities, in which we have harmed, and through the process of healing, we are recognizing the ripple effects of harm and the need to at least

try to make amends.

"In addition to those we have harmed, many of our friends and family live in these communities. Every community member deserves the opportunity to heal. On behalf of the nearly 2,000 prisoners of OSP, we thank you for the opportunity to help make improvements to your beautiful Japanese garden in the hope that the funds will help your Garden assist in the healing of others."

"Thank you for the honor you have bestowed on us to participate in a small way to a BIG project."

- Johnny, adult in custody



A portion of OSP's donation will be used to carve this basalt water basin (Chōzubachi.)

Renovation Update

There is much to boast about this month! The machiai is getting prepped for its plaster walls. The accessible path is underway. The stone bridge footings are poured, which means the stone bridges will be installed soon. More boulders are being set, and the bamboo fencing is installed around the perimeter of the island. And, we started planting!

Every Saturday our volunteers are out there assisting our craftsmen in this renovation. The volume of work accomplished is a true testament to their hard work and dedication.

Unfortunately all this progress has



Basalt stone column sliced into three sections to make one of the two stone bridges.

created an unsafe environment for our guests, and we've had to temporarily close the Japanese garden until further notice.



Stone setting at its finest. If stone setting interests you, see our stone-setting workshop offered in April on the back of this newsletter.

Pruning Courses

[REGISTER FOR PRUNING COURSES HERE](#)

Introduction to the Aesthetic Pruning Approach: Thursday, April 9, 2026, 6-8pm, \$20 on Zoom

Join us for a Zoom webinar on the Introduction to the Aesthetic Pruning Approach with Portland-based aesthetic pruner, Maryann Lewis. This webinar will introduce you to a thoughtful approach to pruning that goes beyond basic cutting, focusing instead on enhancing the natural form, health, and long-term beauty of your trees and shrubs, all while creating a pruning plan that supports your overall garden goals. Perfect for home gardeners and landscape enthusiasts alike. *Enjoy access to the recording for two weeks after the event.*



Stone-Setting Path Workshop with Professional Stone Mason Josh Bond: Saturday, April 18, 2026, 9am-3pm – \$125 at GJG

This 6-hour, hands-on workshop introduces the fundamentals of building a durable bluestone path, with a focus on proper subgrade preparation, base construction, and stone setting techniques. Participants will learn directly from a professional stone mason through demonstration and guided practice, gaining insight into the methods that ensure long-lasting results. In the afternoon, attendees will apply what they've learned by helping construct a small section of pathway at Tsuru Island, using it as a teaching platform to practice leveling, placement, and stability. This workshop is ideal for homeowners, landscape enthusiasts, and anyone interested in working with natural stone—no prior experience required.

Spring Pine Work: Sunday, May 3, 2026, 1-3pm, \$45 at Bentwood Tree Farm in Boring, OR

Learn all about the why's and how's of candling pines at the instructor's pine nursery. When should you remove the whole candle, and when should you break the candles. Laura will candle, needle, and talk about structuring pines too! Bring your gloves. Laura often turns her class into a collaborative session.

This workshop is certified by the Oregon Landscape Contractors Board. Licensed landscape construction professionals receive three Continuing Education Hours (CEH).

Cultural Events

Kodomo no Hi (Children's Day): Sunday, May 3, 2026, 11am-2pm at the Gresham Japanese Garden, Ebetsu Plaza/Kyoudou Center

Kodomo no Hi will be a fun-filled celebration for families. Inside, children can enjoy coloring pages, storytime, and hands-on crafts, and a dedicated origami table managed by the Mt. Hood Community College Japanese Club. Outside, the garden comes alive with a koi fishing identification game by NW Koi and Goldfish Club, a scavenger hunt, bubbles, face painting, and koinobori decorations made from children's artwork hanging throughout the space.



Ikebana Exhibition: Sunday, May 31, 2026, 11am-3pm at the Gresham Japanese Garden, Kyoudou Center

Visit the first GJG Ikebana exhibit by our Ikebana instructor Nana Bellerud and her students with support by Ikebana Iwaya Fund, including a demonstration at 1pm. Light refreshments will be served.

Workshops

The Art of Bonsai: On the third Saturday, 1-3pm or third Thursday, 6-8pm – \$55

BOBBY CURTTRIGHT, BONSAI MASTER: April class will focus on making a kusamono with *Vaccinium ovatum* (Evergreen Huckleberry). The project-based workshops are adapted to the level in your practice. Bobby Curttright was an apprentice to Bonsai Master Michael Hagedorn. Alongside his three-year apprenticeship, Bobby traveled to Japan for weeks at a time to study under Mr. Hagedorn's sensei, the famous Mr. Shinji Suzuki.

Introduction to Ikebana: Tuesday, April 14, 2026, 1-3pm – \$50 in the Kyoudou Center

NANA BELLERUD, IKEBANA TEACHER: Nana Bellerud will lead April's Ikebana workshop focusing on popular Japanese spring-blooming plants such as sakura and pear blossoms, including their symbolism and seasonal meanings. Students explore their creativity and turn their ideas into arrangements.