Japan's Flower Culture

Life and culture in relation to flowers and plants - A literary calendar of flowers and plants -

In Japan, a country where flowers and plants have a strong presence, there are various festivities and customs in connection with flowers and plants. Participation in these annual events allows the Japanese to establish and reinforce the bonds they have with one another. The Japanese possess a unique sense of beauty hidden in its traditions, in which simplicity takes precedence over splendor. Such sense was developed in the pursuit for beauty derived from being at one with nature, accompanied by the feeling of loneliness of some kind at its core. This sentiment has been passed on over generations in its world-class traditional culture, such as the Japanese floral art (ikebana), Bonsai, and Tea ceremony.

SPRING

◆ Cherry Blossom (Sakura) Viewing. Hiromi (村雨) Traditional custom of enjoying the beauty of Sakuras from late March to early April. Mostly having a party under the tree.

◆ Children's Day. Taneyo no Soda (田ネ油の春) At Children's Day or May 5th, Calamities are added to bathwater because people believe Calamities possess the power of removing negative vibes.

WINTER

◆ New Year's senexen pine branches, Kadomatsu (押立). "Kadomatsu" is a decoration made with assembled pine branches enhanced by sets of bamboo and sprays of pine trees.

SUMMER

◆ Star Festival. Tanabata (七夕). An event on July 7th, making one wish upon the stars. People wear three wishes on colorful strips of paper and hang them on bamboo branches.

◆ The Obon Festival (夏頃). This is a Buddhist event occurring from the 13th to 16th of July or August to hold a memorial service to the spirits of ancestors. Some specific kind of flowers called O-bon flowers are offered to ancestors on three days.

The Bonsai

"Bonsai" is an ornamental potted plant created by using branches and seed of plants. An array of plants such as pine, sakaki, azalea, Japanese cherry, Japanese apricot, etc. are used as main materials, and the branches are delicately trimmed into different sizes and shapes before they are carefully put together as the final product.

The Japanese Floral Art (Ikebana)

"Ikebana" is one of the Japanese traditional arts that became widespread in Japan from about the 16th century. The set of Ikebana has the fundamental concept in combining some elements by using flowers to express the beauty of nature and one's sentiment towards nature.

生け花

生け花は16世紀前半から広く普及した日本の伝統芸術の1つです。自然の美や心に感じる感性をどのように表現するかという考え方があります。

FLOWER BY FLOWER

日本の花には、花々の隠されたさまざまな行事や習慣があります。日本人は、そうした年間の催しごとを共有しあうことで、お互いの紳士を確認しています。

また、日本人は、自然を尊び景美を築くよさともいう美の感覚を伝統的に秘めています。それは、ある種の寂寥感が根に付かないもので、自然と一体となった花の世界の中を生きることです。こうした心の世界は、日本の世界に咲く生き花や盆栽、あるいは草剣などの日本伝統文化に感じと受け継がれています。