

## **ANNEX A: Japanese Cherry Trees, Annual Cherry Blossom Festival, and Sample Cherry Walk Program Outline.**

(Adapted from materials provided by PR Erin Kendrick)

Each spring, National Mall rangers conduct “Cherry Blossom Walks”. These normally depart from the Jefferson or FDR Memorials and circumnavigate the Tidal Basin where special wayside exhibits are displayed during the season. These interpretive programs often begin in the second or third week of March and continued through the peak blooming of the trees. Historically, Rangers have offered the programs three times daily: at 10am, 2pm & 5pm.

All staff Rangers have the opportunity to conduct these walks. If you have a particular interest in doing a Cherry Blossom program, let your supervisor or event coordinator know. Prepare yourself to lead walks by reviewing the attached information – actually develop an interpretive program. Use the sample walk outline for ideas, but emphasize whatever aspect of the cherry trees you would like to (history, horticulture, as a springboard to talk about Thomas Jefferson’s gardens and love of plants, etc.)

### **Background and Reference Material for Cherry Blossom Interpretation.**

The story behind the donation and planting of these trees in the Nation's Capital is interesting.

In Japan, the flowering cherry tree or “Sakura”, as it Japanese people call it, is

one of the most exalted of all flowering plants. The high regard in which it is held is reflected in all aspects of the culture, life, and literature of the Japanese people. As early as the 5th century, A.D., the Japanese Emperor and his Court paid homage to the Sakura.

Through the ages, the Japanese have equated the brief transient beauty of the cherry blossom with that of the human life:

**Yo no naka wa  
Mikka minu ma ni  
Sakura kana**

**(Life is short, like the three-day glory  
of the cherry blossom)**

By 1800, a collection of approximately 1, 000 cherry trees containing nearly 80 different selections had been planted at Kyoto, Japan.

At the end of 19th century, the Sakura had become an integral part of Japanese culture with more than 130 recognized cultivated selections. Eliza Scidmore, an American writer traveling in Japan at the turn of the 20th century, wrote that

*“except Fuji-Yama and the moon, no other object has been the theme and inspiration of so many millions of Japanese poems as the cherry blossom...”*

### **History of the Cherry Trees in Washington, D.C.**

**1885:** Mrs. Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore, upon returning to Washington from her first visit to Japan, approached the Superintendent of Public Building and Grounds with the proposal that cherry trees be planted along the soon to reclaimed Potomac waterfront.

Her request fell on deaf ears. Over the next 24 years Mrs. Scidmore approached every new Superintendent with her proposal with no success.

**1906:** Dr. David Fairchild, plant explorer and U.S. Department of Agriculture official, imported 75 flowering cherry trees and 25 single-flowered weeping types from the Yokohama Nursery Company in Japan. He planted these on a hillside on his own land in Chevy Chase, Maryland, where he was testing their hardiness.

**1907:** The Fairchilds, pleased with the success of the trees, began to promote Japanese flowering cherry trees as the ideal type of tree to plant along avenues in the Washington area.

Friends of the Fairchilds also became interested and on September 26, arrangements were completed with the Chevy Chase Land Company to order 300 Oriental cherry trees for the Chevy Chase area.

**1908:** Dr. David Fairchild gave cherry saplings to boys from each District of Columbia school to plant in their schoolyard for the observance of Arbor Day. In closing his Arbor Day lecture, Dr. Fairchild for the first time expressed an appeal that the "Speedway" (the present day corridor of Independence Avenue, SW, in West Potomac Park) be transformed into a "Field of Cherries".

In attendance was Eliza Scidmore, whom afterwards he referred to as a great authority on Japan.

**1909:** Mrs. Scidmore decided to try to raise the money required to purchase the cherry trees and then donate the trees to the city. As a matter of course Mrs.

Scidmore sent a note to the new First Lady Helen Herron Taft outlining her new plan.

First Lady Taft had once lived in Japan and was familiar with the beauty of the flowering cherry trees. Two days later the First Lady responded:

White House, Washington. April 7, 1909

*Thank you very much for your suggestion about the cherry trees. I have taken the matter up and am promised the trees, but I thought perhaps it would be best to make an avenue of them, extending down to the turn in the road, as the other part (beyond the railroad bridge --Ed.) is still too rough to do any planting. Of course, they could not reflect in the water, but the effect would be very lovely of the long avenue. Let me know what you think about this.*

Sincerely yours, Helen H. Taft

**April 8, 1909:** the day after Mrs. Taft's letter, Dr. Jokichi Takamine, the Japanese chemist famous as the discoverer of adrenaline and takadiastase, was in Washington with Mr. Midzuno, Japanese consul in New York and when told that Washington was to have Japanese cherry trees planted along the Speedway, asked whether First Lady Taft would accept a donation of an additional 2,000 trees to fill out the area. Mr. Midzuno thought it was a fine idea and suggested that the trees be given in the name of the city of Tokyo. Dr. Takamine and Mr. Midzuno met with First Lady Taft, who accepted the offer of the 2,000 trees.

**April 13, 1909:** Five days after First Lady Taft's request, the Superintendent

of Public Building and Grounds initiated the purchase of 90 Fugnezo Cherry Trees (Prunus serrulata "Fugenzo") from Hoopes Brothers and Thomas Co., West Chester, PA The trees were planted along the Potomac River from the present site of the Lincoln Memorial, south toward East Potomac Park. After planting it was discovered that the trees were not correctly named. The trees were determined to be the cultivar Shirofugen (Prunus serrulata "Shirofugen") and have since disappeared.

**August 30;** the Japanese Embassy informed the Department of State that the City of Tokyo intended to donate 2,000 cherry trees to the United States to be planted along the Potomac River.

**December 10, 1909:** 2,000 cherry trees arrive in Seattle from Japan.

**January 6, 1910:** trees arrive in Washington, DC

**January 19, 1910:** To everyone's dismay, an inspection team for the Department of Agriculture found the trees were infested with insects and nematodes and other diseases. To protect American growers, the department concluded that the trees must be destroyed.

**January 28, 1910:** consent from President Taft to burn trees. This diplomatic setback resulted in letters from the Secretary of State and representations to the Japanese Ambassador expressing deep regret of all concerned. Dr. Takamine and the Mayor of Tokyo, Yukio Ozaki met the distressing news with determination and good will. Dr. Takamine again donated the costs for the trees, whose number

had now increased to 3,020. The scions for these trees were taken in December 1910 from the famous collection on the bank of the Arakawa River in Adachi Ward, a suburb of Tokyo, and grafted on wild cherry root stock.

**February 14, 1912:** 3,020 cherry trees of 12 varieties were shipped from Yokohama on board the S.S. Awa Maru, bound for Seattle. Upon arrival, they were transferred to insulated freight cars for the shipment to Washington.

**March 26, 1912:** 3,020 cherry trees arrive in Washington, DC. The trees consisted of the following varieties:

Prunus x yedoensis "Yoshino"	1,800
Prunus serrulata "Ariake"	100
"Fugenzo"	120
"Fukurokuju"	50
"Gyoiko"	20

**(These following were planted on the White House Grounds)**

"Ichiyo"	160
"Jo-noi"	80
"Kwanzan"	350
"Mikuruma-gaeshi"	20
"Shirayuki"	130
"Surugadai-nioi"	50
"Taki-nioi"	140

**Total  
3,020**

**March 27,** First Lady Taft and the Viscountess Chinda, wife of the Japanese Ambassador, planted the first two cherry trees on the northern bank of the Tidal Basin, about 125 feet south of what is now Independence Avenue, SW. The first two trees planted were Yoshino cherry trees. At the conclusion of the ceremony, First Lady Taft presented a

bouquet of "American Beauty" roses to Viscountess Chinda. Washington's renowned Cherry Blossom Festival had its inception in this simple ceremony, witnessed by only a few persons.

These two original trees are still standing today several hundred yards west of the John Paul Jones statue at the south end of 17th Street. Located at the bases of the trees are large bronze plaques which commemorate the occasion.

**1913 - 1920** Workmen continued the planting of Yoshino trees around the Tidal Basin. The cherry trees of the other 11 varieties and the remaining Yoshino trees were planted in East Potomac Park.

**In Spring of 1927**, the original planting of Japanese cherry trees was commemorated by a re-enactment of the event by Washington school children.

**In 1934**, the District of Columbia Commissioners sponsored a three-day celebration. The next year the first Cherry Blossom Festival was jointly sponsored by many civic groups. It became an annual event. In 1949, Cherry Blossom Princesses were selected from every state and territory to participate in the festival.

**In 1952**, cuttings from the cherry trees in the United States were sent to Japan to restore *Japan's* noted collection of trees on the banks of the Arakawa River in the Adachi Ward which had deteriorated during the war years. Trees in the Adachi Ward were the parent stock for the trees given to the U.S

**On March 30, 1954**, Sadao Iguchi, the Japanese Ambassador to the United States presented a 20-ton, 300-year-old

Japanese Stone Lantern to the city of Washington.

**In 1957**, the Mikimoto Pearl Crown was donated for use at the Cherry Blossom Festival.

**In 1958**, the Japanese Pagoda, hewn out of rough stone, was placed on west bank of the Tidal Basin near the Jefferson Memorial and dedicated April 18, 1958. It was presented as a gift to the City of Washington, D.C., by the Mayor of Yokohama.

Several hundred Yoshino cherry trees from another generous donation from the Japanese Government were planted in 1965 on the Washington Monument Grounds. Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson wife of President Johnson, and Mrs. Ryuji Takeuchi, wife of Ambassador Takeuchi participated in the planting.

**In 1982**, approximately 800 cuttings from the original trees at the Tidal Basin were sent to Japan to help them retain the genetic characteristics of their trees.

**From 1986 to 1988**, a total of 676 new cherry trees were planted at a cost of \$101,558 in private funds donated to the Blossoms In Our Future campaign. The National Park Service sponsored the campaign to help restore the number of trees to what they were at the time of the original gift from Japan.

**The following are descriptions of the flowering cherry trees.**

**YOSHINO CHERRY  
(Prunus x yedoensis)**

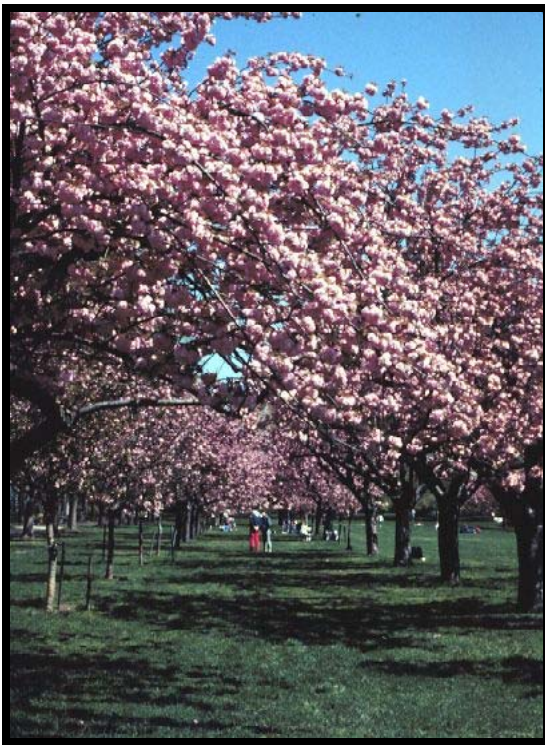
Habit; a round topped, wide spreading tree that reaches 30 to 50 feet at maturity. Flowers; white, single in clusters of 2 to 5, and almond-scented.

This hybrid cherry of unknown Japanese origin was first noticed in Tokyo about 1872 and is now one of the favorite cultivated cherry trees of Japan.



Yoshino

**KWANZAN CHERRY**  
(*Prunus serrulata* “Kwanzan”)



Kwanzan

Habit; an upright-spreading tree to 30 feet, with a rounded crown and stiff

ascending branches. Flowers; double, with about 30 petals, in pendulous clusters of 3 to 5, sometimes more, clear pink and fading but small, up to 2 1/2 inches across, with many more or less petaloid stamens often partly concealing the two green leafy carpels which protrude from the center of the flower.

**AKEBONO CHERRY**  
(*Prunus x yedoensis* “Akebono”)

Habit; a round topped, wide spreading tree that can reach 30 to 50 feet at maturity. Flowers; single, pale pink that fade to white, in clusters of 2 to 5.



Akebono

This cultivar is losing popularity in the nursery trade and is being replaced with the cultivar Afterglow (*Prunus x yedoensis* "Afterglow") which has pink blossoms that are deeper in color and do not fade.

**TAKESIMENSIS CHERRY**  
(*Prunus takesimensis*)

Habit; an upright spreading tree that can reach 30-40 ft. at maturity. Flowers; white, in large clusters with short pedicels. This species is known to grow in wet locations in its native habitat and is currently being tested in East Potomac Park for tolerance to excessive moisture.



**WEeping JAPANESE CHERRY**  
(*Prunus subhirtella* var. *pendula*)

Habit; tree 20 to 40 feet high, with a round-flattened, gracefully, weeping crown. Usually grafted about 6 feet on the understock.



**Weeping Cherry**

Flowers; single, pink flowers. This variety is very variable and select cultivars differ in form and color. (i.e.: "Pendula Rosea", single deep pink flowers; "Pendula Plena Rosea", double, pink flowers; "Pendula Alba", single, white flowers; "Rosey Cloud", double, bright pink flowers; "Snowfozam", single, white flowers etc.)

**AUTUMN FLOWERING CHERRY**  
(*Prunus subhirtella* var. *autumnalis*)

Habit; an upright rounded tree to 25-30 ft. with a 15-20 ft. spread. Flowers; semi-double, pink. During warm periods in the fall they will open sporadically and then fully flower the following spring.

**SARGENT CHERRY**  
(*Prunus sargentii*)

Habit; Upright to 40-50 ft. with spreading branches approximately equal to height. Flowers; single, deep pink, in clusters.



**Sargent**

**FUGENZO CHERRY**  
(*Prunus serrulata* "Fugenzo")

Habit; tree up to 20 feet high and 20 feet wide, with a broad crown, often flattened and with the branches intercrossing horizontally. Flowers; double, about 30 petals, rose-pink, becoming lighter with age but never white, up to 2 inches across, in pendulous clusters of 4 to 6. This is one of the oldest cultivated cherry trees in Japan.

**SHIROFUGEN CHERRY**  
(*Prunus serrulata* "Shirofugen")



**Shirofugen**

Habit; a flat topped, wide spreading tree to 20-25 ft. Flowers; double, in large clusters, white when open aging to pink.

**“OKAME”**

**(Prunus x “Okame”)**

Habit; Upright tree to 25 ft. with a 20 ft. spread. Flowers; semi-double, pink. The earliest flowering cherry.

**Types of Cherry Trees along the Tidal Basin, 1,628 trees (Jan 97 data):**

Count	Common Name
<b>1405</b>	<b>Yoshino</b>
<b>105</b>	<b>Akebono</b>
<b>44</b>	<b>Kwanzan</b>
<b>34</b>	<b>Weeping</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>Fugenzo</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>Autumn Flowering</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Sargent</b>

An additional 1,681 trees grow in East Potomac Park, 342 are on the Washington Monument Grounds, and 49 trees reside at other park sites.

## **Sample Cherry Blossom Walk/ Program**

**Theme:** The cherry trees represent the U.S. & Japan's common appreciation for natural beauty. Each culture values the significance of the flowering cherry tree and has shared this heritage with the other.

**Introduction:** (Walks to begin at Jefferson Mem. plaza)

Stress safety messages: (traffic along basin, oncoming bikes, crossing streets...) State length of walk and time frame (out to stone lantern is approx. 3/4 mile for 1 hour)

### **Stop 1, Jefferson Memorial Plaza Level:**

A. Jefferson Memorial is one of most beautiful sites and green spaces in D.C. Jefferson himself had great interest in natural things, plant life. His cultivation of trees at Monticello, including fruit-bearing & a few ornamental cherry trees.

1. This area used to be a dreary, undesirable swamp--plans made to reclaim the land & deepen the river channel in order to expand the capital city (McMillan Commission selected site in 1901 in order for this to happen)

2. Potomac Park was new landfill reclaimed by the Army Corps of Engineers project. Next step was to plant trees--to hold soil down & to beautify.

B. At nearly the same time, David Fairchild a plant explorer, with USDA's Office of Foreign Seed & Plant Introduction, was interested in introducing flowering cherry tree varieties to Washington, D.C. upon seeing their blooms on a trip to Japan in 1902.

1. Fairchild ordered flowering cherries from nursery in Japan to do experimental plantings on his land in Chevy Chase. Is very pleased by their success & begins promoting them for rest of the city.

2. Fairchild makes arrangement with area schoolchildren to plant cherry trees on Arbor Day. Eliza Scidmore is in attendance.

### **Stop 2 Along couple of the older cherry trees, before the inlet bridge:**

A. The story of the donation of flowering cherry trees by Japan

1. Mrs. Helen Taft, who was interested in beautification of the city, heard of Fairchild's efforts and also received a note from Eliza Scidmore. Mrs. Scidmore had visited Japan & witnessed the cherry trees in 1885, and upon returning proposed their planting in D.C., especially along the "speedway" (West Potomac Park)

2. Diplomatic officials become involved, as talk is great of a possible "gift" of cherry trees from Japan. The Sec. of State & the Japanese Ambassador to the U.S. discussed such an idea, and in 1909 the word was sent of a donation of 2,000 cherry trees



to the U.S. in the name of friendship. Mayor of Tokyo was pivotal in this donation of trees, due to his interest in Japanese-American relations.)

B. December, 1909, the trees arrive in Seattle & were transferred by rail to D.C. Plans made prior to arrival that the trees be inspected for any foreign insects, disease. When trees are inspected at USDA storehouse on Monument grounds, they were found to be too large, severely root-pruned and infested with several pests, including scale & nematodes. The decision is made, based upon strong recommendations by the USDA, to burn the trees & any packing materiel. The U.S. & Japan both expressed their sentiments over the unfortunate situation.

**Stop 3 Fountain Four (Optional stop, depending on your program & desired length of walk):** Here, you may want to continue the program, along the lines of Potomac Park's beautification and the intent to make it a place people will want to come & visit. Fountain 4 is the only garden remaining from four gardens built between 1905-6. The other 3 gardens were destroyed when 14th St. bridge was built in the 40's. Mrs. Taft was involved in this project. The garden contains hundreds of pansies in late fall that bloom in the spring, along with nearby tulips, hyacinths, forsythia bushes and magnolias. In summer, annuals like marigolds replace pansies, and cannas & waterlillies fill the pool.

*Conservation Tree* can also be visited before you resume the sidewalk trail along basin. It's a Green Mountain sugar maple, planted with soil from all 50 states. Here, you can also point out the weeping variety of the flowering cherry, *Prunus subhirtella* var. *pendula*)

**Stop 4 Older cherry trees (big ones, have lots of burles & bumps) near pagoda:**

A. How the second shipment of trees from Japan occurred.

1. 1912, 6,000 trees shipped from Japan--3,000 for Washington & 3,000 for the Botanic Gardens in N.Y.C. Utmost care was given to this gift of trees; careful storage & fumigation steps were taken by the Japanese growers so that there would be little chance of infestation. The trees passed inspection this time.

2. The types of cherry trees sent-- 12 different varieties. The most predominant, "Yoshino", a single-flowered cherry with pink buds & white flowers found all along the basin. And "Kwanzan", a double-flowering cherry with clear pink, fading flowers found mostly along Hams Point, East Potomac Park. The trees were planted along the Tidal Basin, along now Ohio Dr, on White House grounds & Rock Creek park.

3. Mrs. Taft & the Japanese Ambassador's wife Viscountess Chinda plant the first two trees during a formal ceremony.

4. The Pagoda--ancient sculpture of type found throughout mountains of Japan  
\*Gift of friendship presented by Mayor of Yokohama to city of Washington, April, 1958.  
\*Importance of the cherry tree, "sakura" to the Japanese culture and why they considered their gift of cherries so sacred. Japanese folklore & literature abound in references to

cherry trees & their blossoms. Flowering cherries are subject of many legends & poems

**Stop 5 Near older trees overhanging Tidal Basin walk:** Discuss the type & predominance of the flowering cherries today & efforts to maintain original genetic stock.

1. Yoshino variety is the most common along basin--the kind most think of when we hear cherry blossoms. Trees that are some pink color along the walkway are the "Akebono," a mutation of the Yoshino developed in the U.S.

2. NPS resource management is making an effort to maintain clonal lines of the gift of trees from Japan. (Approx. 150 of the original trees are still alive.) The National Arboretum, also interested in this idea, has assisted by grafting propagations from the original trees, such as the two planted by Mrs. Taft & the Viscountess. However, a significant resource management issue regarding such propagations is the risk of keeping any virus or bug within a lineage of trees if we continue to produce from the parent stock. These problems could severely weaken & even kill trees.

**Stop 6 Stone markers at base of original two plantings:** Two trees planted in 1912 ceremony with Mrs. Taft located here. Tell how gift-giving has continued over the years, starting with these two trees. In 1952, cuttings from the cherry trees in the U.S. were sent to Japan to restore their famous collection of trees on the banks of the Arakawa River which had deteriorated during the war years. This region of Japan is where the parent stock, for our cherry trees, came from. And in 1965, more trees came from Japan--these were planted on the Washington Mon. grounds.

**Stop 7 The stone lantern:** The importance of the cherry blossoms in our culture... the thousands of people who come to see the blossoms each spring.

1. 17th century lantern, approx. 350 yrs. old, donated by the city of Tokyo for dedication at the 1954 Cherry Blossom Festival to mark the 100th anniversary of the Treaty of Peace signed by the U.S. & Japan.

2. Cherry Blossom Festival--celebrating the blooming of the trees Number of different activities center around the trees--band concerts, regattas, cherry blossom princesses, and parade. First Festival, 1935. "Friendship flame" lit at opening ceremony.

**Conclusion:** These trees are an important part of our cultural heritage. It's significant that we can share this appreciation for the flowering cherries with Japan. The Park Service is charged with preserving and protecting them. Preservation Message: no picking blossoms, climbing trees. Costly to maintain and replant. It's possible to sponsor the planting of new trees.

**APRIL , 1999 CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL SCHEDULE**  
**(From THE WASHINGTON POST)**

### **Cherry Blossom Festival**

This year's Cherry Blossom Festival begins today. Highlights of official events during the two week festival, which runs through April 11:

- **TODAY:** The official opening ceremony at 2 p.m. , Sylvan Theater, the Mall at 15th Street.

2:30P.M. a National Park Service Concert, featuring the Glenbard West High School Choir and Middleton High School Choir (4 p.m.), at the Lincoln Memorial.

- **Tuesday, March 30:**  
Hands-on Japanese cultural activities for children, Capital Children's Museum, 800 Third St. NE. Call 202-675-4120. \$2 off admission fee.

9:30a.m.: Tree planting sponsored by DC Chamber of Commerce, Sixth and Water Sts. SW, 9:30 a.m.

11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.:  
D.C. musicians perform onstage at Franklin Square Park, 14th and I Sts. NW.

- **Saturday, April 3:** First Annual Cherry Blossom Freedom Walk (approximately 3.5 miles);  
10 30 a.m. sign-in. Preregistration required. Call 301-530-0048.

- **Sunday, April 4:** The traditional lighting of the stone lantern at the Tidal Basin, 3p.m.

- **Monday April 5:** National Cherry Blossom Festival Golf Tourn. Registration,

10:30 a.m. Call 202-543-6864.

- **Wednesday, April 7:** The Art of Sushi, demonstration by the Master Sushi Chefs of Japan from 7 to 9 p.m. at-the Phillips Flagship Restaurant on the Maine Avenue waterfront. Free tastes and admission, but reservations should be made by calling Honey Konicoff at the restaurant, 202-488-8515.

- **Thursday, April 8:**  
Fashion Show Luncheon. 11:30 a.m. J.W. Marriott Hotel, 14th and Pa. Ave. NW. Tickets required. Call 202-547-1500.

Noon to 2 p.m.: National Cherry Blossom Festival Luncheon Cruise aboard the Odyssey. Noon to 2 p.m. Sixth and Water Sts.SW. Call 202-484-2320 for reservations.

- **Saturday, April 10:** The National Cherry Blossom Festival Parade, 9:30 a.m., Constitution Avenue between Seventh and 17<sup>th</sup> Sts NW.

Noon to 5 p.m.: 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Sakura Matsuri (Cherry Blossom Festival): Arts crafts, food, at Freedom Plaza.

9 a.m. to 5 p.m.: George Washington Invitational Crew Classic, Potomac River waterfront.

9 a.m.: 33rd National Cherry Blossom Festival Rugby Tournament. Top teams from across the United States and Canada. Lincoln Memorial and West Potomac Park.

9 a.m. to 6 p.m.: Earth Day Celebration-Spectrum of Light Youth Rally, at the Sylvan Theater.

Beginning at 8 p.m.: Parade of lighted boats salutes the cherry blossoms along the Southwest waterfront.

- **Sunday, April 11:** Nortel -10 Mile Run/3K Fun Run at 8 a.m., West Potomac Park.

1-4 p.m.: Tea Dance sponsored by Beethoven Society, Crystal Room, Willard Hotel. 1-4 p.m. Cost: \$45 per person. Call 202-822-8260 for more information.

**SOURCE:** National Cherry Blossom, inc.