

Cherry blossom

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A **cherry blossom** is a [flower](#) of many trees of genus [Prunus](#) . The most well-known species is the **Japanese cherry**, [Prunus serrulata](#) , which is commonly called **sakura** (桜 or 櫻; さくら).



They are widely distributed, especially in the [temperate zone](#) of the [Northern Hemisphere](#) including Japan, Taiwan, Korea, Mainland China, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Myanmar, Thailand and West Siberia. Along with the [chrysanthemum](#), the cherry blossom is considered the [national flower](#) of Japan.

All varieties of cherry blossom trees produce small, unpalatable fruit or edible [cherries](#). Edible cherries generally come from cultivars of the related species [Prunus avium](#) and [Prunus cerasus](#) .

Chapter 2. Culinary use

Cherry blossoms and leaves are edible and both are used as food ingredients in Japan:

- The blossoms are pickled in salt and [umezu \(ume vinegar\)](#), and used for coaxing out flavor in [wagashi](#), (a [traditional](#) Japanese confectionery,) or [anpan](#), (a Japanese sweet [bun](#), most-commonly filled with [red bean paste](#)).
- Salt-pickled blossoms in hot water are called [sakurayu](#), and drunk at festive events like weddings in place of [green tea](#).
- The [leaves](#), mostly from the [Ōshima cherry](#) because of the softness, are also pickled in salted water and used for [sakuramochi](#).
- The fruit, the *sakuranbo*, is small and does not have much flesh beyond the seed within. Due to their bitter taste, the *sakuranbo* should not be eaten raw, or whole; the seed inside should be removed and the fruit-itself processed as preserves.

Since the leaves contain [coumarin](#), which is toxic in large doses, it is not recommended to eat them in great quantities. Likewise, the seeds should not be eaten.