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# AJNR

## Perspectives

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Title: Weeping Higan Cherry Tree. The weeping Higan cherry tree (*Prunus Subhirtella*), seen here in early bloom, is head-turning and soothing. “Weeping” describes trees whose branches gracefully bend, droop, and cascade due to their softness. “Higan” is derived from the Japanese Buddhist equinox ceremony of Ohigan. Because the blossoms are so short-lived, they are symbolic of the ephemeral nature of life. While the blossoms are short-lived, the trees can display impressive longevity. Miharu Takizakura, a 1000 year-old weeping Higan cherry in Japan that was designated a national treasure in 1922, draws an estimated 300,000 visitors per year. Contributing to their longevity is a Lazarus-like process known as endocaulous rooting, in which a root growing inside a decaying trunk develops into a new trunk that may be revealed when the dead trunk drops off. Native to Japan, they were introduced into the United States and Europe in the late 19th century, where cherry blossom festivals have taken root. Kobayashi Issa, regarded as one of “great four” Haiku masters of Japan, wrote: “What a strange thing! to be alive beneath cherry blossoms” and “In the cherry blossom’s shade there’s no such thing as a stranger.”

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