

# The Waterfall Cherry of Miharuru

**An ancient cherry tree is the star attraction of the cherry blossom season in Miharuru Town, Fukushima Prefecture.**

UMEZAWA AKIRA

**I**N Miharuru Town, central Fukushima Prefecture, there stands a single cherry tree that attracts many visitors. *Miharuru Takizakura*, an ornamental weeping cherry, is one of the Three Great Cherry Trees of Japan, together with the *Usuzumizakura* in Neo (Motosu City, Gifu Prefecture) and the *Jindaizakura* in Yamataka (Hokuto City, Yamanashi Prefecture). The tree is 12 meters tall, 9.5 meters in circumference, and its branches extend 22 meters east to west and 18 meters north to south. In the spring, it blooms with countless small, light pink blossoms. Because the magnificent sight resembles a waterfall, the tree is called the *takizakura* (“waterfall cherry”).

This famous tree is in fact just one of approximately 2,000 weeping cherries in Miharuru, which flourished as a castle town in the past and has many temples and shrines where cherry trees grow. In Miharuru, these cherry trees bloom simultaneously, and during the blooming season the entire town becomes a destination to see cherry blossoms.

Miura Reina from the Tourism Department at Miharuru Machizukuri Corporation says, “We gaze at the blossoms day after day when they are in bloom. About thirty years ago, the flowers would bloom somewhere around April 20, but in recent years, the trees often bloom in early April, perhaps due to the effects of global warming. The trees began blooming on

*Miharuru Takizakura* in full bloom  
Photo: Courtesy of Miharuru Machizukuri Corporation



April 8 in 2019, and reached their peak on April 16.”

The actual age of the famous takizakura is unknown, but it has been estimated at over 1,000 years old, and was designated a national natural monument in 1922. Actions have been taken to protect the precious tree over the years. In 1990, the Takizakura Preservation Society was formed, and each

year, members remove weeds from around the roots, improve the soil with compost, and remove and disinfect dead branches under the guidance of tree doctors. In 2005, over twenty branches were broken by heavy snow, and so the Society carried out repairs with assistance from the national government.

“There have been visitors who

have experienced major illnesses and are moved to tears on seeing the tree, saying, ‘I’m so glad I was able to see this tree while I was alive’,” says Miura. “As the times change, and even as the old townscape disappears, the takizakura is always here, unchanging. The same holds true for me, but I think there are a lot of locals who come to see the tree when feeling down.”

In the year following the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, residents from the coastal regions, who came to Miharu for shelter after their homes were destroyed, enjoyed flower viewing parties together with locals and found peace for their broken hearts.

The Miharu Town Hall has gifted saplings all over Japan and works to increase offspring trees in order to pass down the takizakura to future generations. Miura says, “Each year, the children at the school next to the tree pick up seeds and plant them. The offspring of the takizakura tree that are raised are then planted in many different places.” So far, saplings and seeds have been gifted to Taiwan, Hungary, Poland, Austria, Bhutan, the UK and United States, among other countries.

Miura says, “There are about 15,000 cherry trees in Miharu Town. When they are in bloom, a truly dream-like scene expands before your eyes.” Surely these beautiful blossoms will continue to bring peace to the hearts of many. 🌸

