

TIME



Tokyo Metropolitan Park Association

DO YOU KNOW THE “REAL” TOKYO?

A walk through Tokyo’s Hama-rikyu Gardens offers a rare escape from the city’s frantic bustle. Wandering past the historic teahouse and ponds, whether during spring’s cherry blossoms or autumn’s warm foliage, it is easy to forget you are standing in the heart of one of the world’s largest metropolises. The year-round upkeep of Hama-rikyu, along with many of Tokyo’s finest green spaces—including Komazawa Olympic Park and Jindai Botanical Gardens in the city’s western suburbs—is handled by the Tokyo Metropolitan Park Association (TMPA).

Chairperson Toshiki Yaoka traces the roots of the city’s green spaces to the postwar period, around the time the association was established in 1954. “We place great importance on maintaining gardens in the best possible condition, while also showcasing their stories and even the trees themselves. Each stone, pond and bridge has its own symbolic meaning dating back to the Edo period,” he said. “We also work to create nighttime experiences by illuminating gardens, cherry blossoms and autumn foliage, encouraging more people to visit in the evenings.”

TMPA now manages 65 facili-

ties across Tokyo. In 2024, its parks and gardens welcomed over 60 million visitors, highlighting the scale of its operations and the need for constant care. Beyond preservation, TMPA also invests in the future of the city’s greenery. “Across Tokyo, we contribute to public services that improve urban greening. These activities include raising public awareness and training human resources in order to enrich greenery across Tokyo. We also hold events that allow visitors to better acquaint themselves with nature, all while communicating the importance of the urban greenery,” said Yaoka.

Working to merge the physical and digital realms, TMPA has launched an app that allows visitors to view scenes from historic gardens of the past, as well as a “digital stamp rally” to showcase new charms of parks and gardens. On the waterfront, one of TMPA’s key responsibilities is to provide water bus services, running from the popular temple district of Asakusa to the Odaiba entertainment area, along Tokyo’s scenic Sumida River. “The water buses also provide vital transportation in times of disaster,” said Yaoka. “Tokyo offers far more than its most familiar sights. Even if you have visited many times in the past, Tokyo still has a world of attractions to discover.”



Toshiki Yaoka
Chairperson

TOKYO’S SEASONAL FLOWERS AND EVENTS

Plum Blossoms: The “spring messengers” bloom with their elegant fragrance towards the end of winter.

Recommended: Koishikawa Korakuen Gardens, Shiba Park, Hama-rikyu Gardens, Mukojima-Hyakkaen Gardens.

Events: Plum Blossom Festival, February 7th–March 1st (Koishikawa Korakuen Gardens, Mukojima-Hyakkaen Gardens), February 10th–March 1st (Jindai Botanical Gardens).

Cherry Blossoms: World-famous sakura where many go for hanami picnics.

Recommended: Yoyogi Park, Koganei Park, Rikugien Gardens.

Events: Nighttime Cherry Blossom Viewing, mid-to-late March (Rikugien Gardens).

Spring Roses: While they bloom twice a year, the spring varieties are often larger and more vibrant. Best to see from April until June.

Recommended: Kyu-Furukawa Gardens, Jindai Botanical Gardens, Yoyogi Park.

Events: Rose Festival (Kyu-Furukawa Gardens, Jindai Botanical Gardens).

*Planned dates for 2026.

Rikugien Gardens in Bunkyo Ward hosts a yearly nighttime cherry blossom viewing event.



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Hama-rikyu Gardens offers a pleasant retreat in the center of Tokyo.