

## Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Saturday, April 9, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "NEWS NOTES FROM WASHINGTON." Information from the Bureau of Plant Industry, United States Department of Agriculture.

---ooOoo---

Cherry blossoms are the news in today's letter from Washington, D. C.

Writes our correspondent: "The weather played a trick on Washington's official cherry-blossom prophet this year. The prophet is Mr. Saunders, chief horticulturist of the National Capitol Parks Service. Each spring along about the middle of March Mr. Saunders takes his well-known walk around the Tidal Basin, looking at the buds on the cherry trees. They say that newspaper men dog his footsteps on that walk, eager for the first news of the famous blossoms.

"This year Mr. Saunders took his walk and then announced that the first blossoms would appear in two weeks -- about the first of April.

"No sooner had that statement spread far and wide than the weather turned warm. The hot Washington sun came down on those cherry trees Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. The thermometer eventually rose to eighty. And on Tuesday, March 22, out came the white blossoms in a rush. That's all it takes to upset the most careful predictions, you see -- just a sudden change of weather.

"Along with the white cherry blossoms the pink magnolias came out. Potomac Park is full of color -- pink and white along with the delicate pale green of the first willow leaves and the brilliant yellow of the forsythia blossoms which as usual came out this year well ahead of the cherry blossoms.

"So all day long lines of cars are driving around the Basin to see the blossoms. And the paths and benches under the trees are filled with those who have come down to stroll and gaze.

"Most Americans, even those who have never visited the Nation's Capital, know the history of Washington's cherry blossoms. Most people know that they were a gift to the City of Washington from the City of Tokyo and that they were planted here in 1912. The cherry blossom is Japan's national flower and emblem. When the cherries bloom in Japan that is the official announcement of spring, the time when everyone celebrates with patriotic festivals. So this was a very graceful gift of friendship from the capitol city of one nation to another.

"But the first 2 thousand trees sent as a gift from Japan were never planted. They were burned instead. Department of Agriculture officials, always on the lookout to prevent dangerous plant diseases and insects from getting into this country, found the trees infected with a dangerous scale.



4/9/38

"The Mayor of Tokyo then had a plot of land chemically prepared and selected cherry slips set out on it. When these healthy trees were large enough for shipping, 3 thousand were sent to Washington and planted on the newly reclaimed flat parkland along the Potomac River. Among these trees were several of the finest varieties known to Japanese horticulturists. To the original 3 thousand trees, new ones have been planted until there are now over 7 thousand.

"This collection includes some 10 or 12 different varieties, chosen for successive blooming, so the cherry blossoms in Washington last for about a month. Visitors who miss the first blossoms, the delicate Yoshino flowers that have white petals with reddish centers so give that faint pink blush against the grey branches -- visitors who are too late to see the cloudlike reflection of these first blossoms in the water of the Tidal Basin, will see the more colorful Kwanzans, the deep pink double blossoms that come out later on the trees planted around Hains Point.

"People often ask why the Japanese cherry trees bear no fruit. The horticulturists say it is a matter largely of weather and insects to carry the pollen. When these are right, the trees bear a good crop of small round shiny black fruits, not much good for eating, however. But frost or cold rainy weather is very likely to catch the blossoms and prevent fruiting.

"But you don't have to come to Washington to see Japanese cherry blossoms in the spring. In several other parts of the country there are very fine collections of these ornamental trees. The Department of Agriculture has a group at Glenn Dale, Maryland, the most complete collection in the country as far as variety goes, and another at Chico, California. The Arnold Arboretum at Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, also has a fine collection and so has the Durand-Eastman Park in Rochester, New York, and Volunteer Park in Seattle, Washington. Several nurseries are also featuring flowering cherry trees these days. And the trees are being used more and more in parks and on private grounds.

"Flowering cherries should thrive in any reasonably good well-drained soil with average moisture provided that the summers are not too hot and the winters too long and cold. The trees need a winter cold enough so that they can have a resting period but not so cold that they are in danger of being winter-killed. As far north as southern Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont, as far south as Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi, they do well."

This concludes this week's news letter from Washington.

\*\*\*\*\*

