

Flowers Herald the Spring



Plum Trees: Kairakuen, Ibaraki Prefecture

Since ancient times, people have loved plum blossoms as a flower of early spring. Plum blossoms come in many colors, from white to pale pink to red. They are beautiful in a way that is different from cherry blossoms.

Kairakuen, which was completed in 1842, is located a seventy-minute train ride from Tokyo and has long been famous for its plum blossoms. About 3,000 plum trees of 100 different varieties are planted in the 13-hectare garden. Many people visit every year to see the plum trees in bloom.

A yellow-green Japanese white-eye (also known as *mejiro*) perched chirping among pink plum blossoms is a representative visual motif of the coming of spring.



Rapeseed Blossoms: Hama-rikyu Gardens, Tokyo

Many people are familiar with rapeseed blossoms as a sign of the arrival of spring. In that season, you can see them in many places. Rapeseed is a truly multitalented plant: the flowers are not just beautiful; they are also edible, and the seeds are a source of vegetable oil!

A field of rapeseed in bloom is like a yellow carpet spreading into the distance. At Hama-rikyu Gardens, in the heart of Tokyo, about 300,000 rapeseed plants bloom in spring. The contrast between the flowers in the foreground and the skyscrapers in the distance is the epitome of the Tokyo landscape.