

THE ARTICLE

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2104/210402-cherry-blossoms.html>

Cherry blossoms in Kyoto, Japan have bloomed at their earliest date in 600 years. Researchers from Osaka University say blossoms in the city of Kyoto peaked on the 26th of March. The previous record for Kyoto was set in 1409, when the season reached its peak on the 27th of March. Data on cherry blossoms blooming in Kyoto go back 1,200 years. As far back as the year 812, officials at Japan's imperial court in Kyoto wrote details on the blooms in documents and diaries. Japan experienced much warmer weather in the first few months of this year. Meteorologists say this is because of climate change. They say many plants are flowering and blossoming earlier than normal because of global warming.

Cherry blossoms are an important part of Japanese culture. People keep a close eye on the news of blossoming times from forecasts made by the Japanese Meteorological Agency. The blossoms are called "sakura" in Japan. Many people plan trips to famous cherry blossom areas and spend hours having picnics under the sakura. The cherry blossoms also provide Japan with an important economic boost each spring. People come from all over the world to view them. Japan's Mainichi newspaper explained the importance of sakura. It wrote: "Sakura has deeply influenced Japanese culture for centuries. It has regularly been used in poetry and literature. Their fragility is seen as a symbol of life, death and rebirth."

Sources: <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20210331/p2g/00m/0na/038000c>
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-56574142>
<https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/climate-change-japan-cherry-blossoms-b1824373.html>

WARM-UPS

1. CHERRY BLOSSOMS: Students walk around the class and talk to other students about cherry blossoms. Change partners often and share your findings.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, talk about these topics or words from the article. What will the article say about them? What can you say about these words and your life?

cherry blossoms / researchers / Kyoto / record / season / peak / weather / climate / important / culture / news / forecast / picnics / boost / trips / literature / life / death

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. CLIMATE CHANGE: Students A **strongly** believe we can reverse climate change; Students B **strongly** believe we can't. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

4. CULTURE: What part do flowers play in the culture of your country? Complete this table with your partner(s). Change partners often and share what you wrote.

	What Flowers?	Their Part in Your Culture
Music		
Literature		
Social activities		
Food		
Seasons		
Celebrations		

5. PEAK: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "peak". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

6. BLOOMS: Rank these with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- Cherry blossoms
- Roses
- Orchids
- Lotus flowers
- Lilies
- Daffodils
- Plum blossoms
- Sunflowers

VOCABULARY MATCHING

Paragraph 1

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| 1. bloomed | a. Existing or occurring before in time or order. |
| 2. blossom | b. The warming of the global weather. |
| 3. peaked | c. The action of a flower or blossom opening. |
| 4. previous | d. Reached a highest point, either of a value or at a set time. |
| 5. officials | e. A flower or a group of flowers, especially on a tree or bush. |
| 6. meteorologist | f. People having a job in government or as a representative of an organization. |
| 7. climate change | g. A weather forecaster. |

Paragraph 2

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| 8. keep a close eye on | h. A prediction or estimate of future events, especially coming weather or a financial trend. |
| 9. forecast | i. Make available for use; supply. |
| 10. provide | j. Hundreds of years. |
| 11. boost | k. Watch closely. |
| 12. influenced | l. Being easily broken or damaged. |
| 13. centuries | m. Changed something. |
| 14. fragility | n. Help or encourage something to increase or improve. |

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2104/210402-cherry-blossoms.html>

1. TRUE / FALSE: Read the headline. Guess if a-h below are true (T) or false (F).

- a. Cherry blossoms last bloomed so early in the year 600. **T / F**
- b. The last record for early blooming cherry blossoms was set in 1409. **T / F**
- c. Officials in Japan wrote details about cherry blossoms in the year 812. **T / F**
- d. Meteorologists say climate change is not why cherry blossoms are early. **T / F**
- e. Japanese people keep a close eye on cherry blossom forecasts. **T / F**
- f. People in Japan spend hours having picnics under *sakura* trees. **T / F**
- g. Cherry blossoms are very bad for Japan's economy. **T / F**
- h. Cherry blossoms are a symbol of life and death in Japan. **T / F**

2. SYNONYM MATCH: (The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. bloomed | a. well known |
| 2. previous | b. usual |
| 3. experienced | c. watch |
| 4. meteorologists | d. frequently |
| 5. normal | e. flowered |
| 6. keep a close eye on | f. uplift |
| 7. famous | g. weather forecasters |
| 8. boost | h. earlier |
| 9. regularly | i. sign |
| 10. symbol | j. encountered |

3. PHRASE MATCH: (Sometimes more than one choice is possible.)

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. The previous record for Kyoto was | a. of Japanese culture |
| 2. As far back as | b. are flowering |
| 3. documents | c. boost |
| 4. They say many plants | d. and diaries |
| 5. blossoming earlier than normal because | e. eye on the news |
| 6. Cherry blossoms are an important part | f. set in 1409 |
| 7. People keep a close | g. picnics under the sakura |
| 8. spend hours having | h. of global warming |
| 9. an important economic | i. a symbol of life |
| 10. Their fragility is seen as | j. the year 812 |

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2104/210402-cherry-blossoms.html>

1. Which Japanese city is mentioned in the article?
2. When was the previous record for the earliest cherry-blossoms?
3. What year do cherry blossom records go back to in a Japanese city?
4. What did officials write details of cherry blossoms in?
5. What reason did meteorologists give for the earlier flowering blossoms?
6. What does the article say cherry blossoms are an important part of?
7. What do people in Japan keep a close eye on?
8. What do Japanese people spend hours doing under cherry blossoms?
9. Where does a newspaper say cherry blossoms have been regularly used?
10. What does the newspaper say fragile cherry blossoms are a symbol of?

AFTER READING / LISTENING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2104/210402-cherry-blossoms.html>

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionary / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'cherry' and 'blossom'.

cherry	blossom
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- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• earliest• city• season• 812• warmer• normal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• part• called• boost• view• deeply• symbol
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CHERRY BLOSSOMS DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

1. What did you think when you read the headline?
2. What images are in your mind when you hear the word 'blossom'?
3. What do you think of cherry blossoms?
4. Why do people love cherry blossoms?
5. What are your favourite blossoms?
6. What do you know about the Japanese city of Kyoto?
7. What blossoms and flowers are important in your country's culture?
8. How important are flowers?
9. How is climate change affecting plants?
10. What three adjectives best describe cherry blossoms?

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CHERRY BLOSSOMS DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

11. Did you like reading this article? Why/not?
12. What do you think of when you hear the word 'Japan'?
13. What do you think about what you read?
14. Why do you think cherry blossoms are so important in Japan?
15. What do you think of picnics to view cherry blossoms?
16. What flowers are a symbol of life and death?
17. What flowers do you look forward to seeing in spring?
18. What do you think cherry blossoms symbolize?
19. What flowers around the world would you like to go and see?
20. What questions would you like to ask the researchers?