A waka (Japanese short poem) poet, Ariwara no Narihira, made a poem about cherry blossoms more than one thousand years ago.

Yononakani taete sakurano nakariseba
haruno kokoroha nodoke karamashi

世の中に絶えて桜のなかりせば
春の心はのどけからまし

It literally means “If it were not for cherry blossoms in the world, our hearts in spring would be more peaceful and calm.” When spring comes, I always think of this poem though I am not a keen poem lover and do not know so many Japanese waka poems.

The poet did not hate cherry blossoms, of course, and did not really wish that there were no cherry blossoms. It is different from saying “I don’t like celery, so I hope there will be no celery in my salad.” On the contrary, because he loved cherry blossoms so much, and so anxiously waited for them to bloom day by day. He thought it would be rather better not to have cherry blossoms at all in this world, so then he would not have to spend days thinking only about them so much. Cherry blossoms are loved by Japanese people this much.

The map on the left is not a weather map. It is a “sakura (cherry blossom) blooming front line map 2013,” published by the Meteorological Agency, Japan. You can see the line 3/15 in the southernmost part of Japan. The lines mean the cherry blossoms are expected to bloom around on March 15th in those areas. They will bloom much earlier in Okinawa. In the Tokyo area, the expected date is March 20th. The lines show that the expected date is gradually going up to the northern areas, and it reaches the northernmost part of Japan on May 15th. So if you travel to the north chasing the sakura blooming front lines, you can enjoy cherry blossoms for two months!

We have cherry trees on the campus here at Mukogawa Fort Wright Institute. Actually some of them are now in full bloom. We are expecting cherry trees in front of the JCC to bloom soon. I am really looking forward to seeing them in bloom. Cherry blossoms in the Nishinomiya main campus were in full bloom around the 25th of March, just as the “sakura map” forecasted.

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To add something important we should be careful about, cherry blossoms are technically different from flowering cherry blossoms. What I have been calling “cherry blossoms” here should be called “flowering cherry blossoms,” which do not bear the fruit “cherries.” We do have both “flowering cherry trees” and “cherry trees” here at MFWI campus. I am very happy about it and delighted to see them in bloom, but it is never easy for me to have a peaceful and calm spring heart.

Images were taken from: *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ariwara_no_Narihira; **http://sakura.weathermap.jp/.

**Mukogawa Family Festival**

A big thank you to our MFWI Students that helped make our Mukogawa Family Festival successful!

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**Japanese Cooking Class**

**Saturday, May 11, 2013**  
**5pm—7pm**  
At JCC, 4001 W Randolph Rd, Spokane, WA

MFWI students will demonstrate how to make a couple of Japanese dishes. Limited space, reserve your spot. $5 per person.

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**Open House in the Tea Room**

May 7, 14, 21, 28  
Times available: 3-4pm & 4-5pm

We enjoy making Usucha (Japanese powdered green tea) and drinking it with Japanese sweets.

Reservation Required, Limited Space  
call Candie to RSVP 328-2971

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**Japanese Cultural Center @ MFWI**

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