

## Ojiya in Summer

Summer brings flowers, festivals, and fireworks to the city of Ojiya. In June, fireflies glow in Funaoka Park, which is located in the heart of Ojiya. On alternate years in August, thousands of sunflowers color the slopes of Yamamotoyama Highland in a carpet of bright yellow. They are planted in rotation with the rapeseed flowers that bloom in spring.

During the Nikko Shrine Shishimai (lion dance) Festival in mid-July, performers dressed as *shishimai* lions dance through the city center, mimicking the mythical creature's movements. The festival includes puppet shows and other traditional performances.

One of the year's biggest events is the three-day Ojiya Festival in late August. It features traditional Bon dances, colorful handcrafted paper floats, folk songs, and a procession of Ojiya's prized fighting bulls. Around 7,000 fireworks are launched on the second day, finishing with the giant and flamboyantly named "Ultra-Wide Vesuvius Super Star Mine" firework, one of the event's main highlights.