

The Omura-Zakura Cherry Trees at Omura Shrine

Two of the cherry trees in front of Omura Shrine are Omura-zakura (*Cerasus serrulata* ‘Mirabilis’), a new variety that was first discovered on the shrine grounds in 1941. Toyama Saburo (1902–1986), a botanist and schoolteacher was looking at the double-petaled Sato-zakura cultivars on the grounds of Omura Shrine when he noticed what he assumed to be an anomaly in the flowers of one of the trees. Closer inspection revealed it to be a completely different variety of cherry tree, which was subsequently named after the city where it was discovered.

Each Omura-zakura flower has between 60 and 200 tightly packed petals, in contrast to the five petals of the most common Somei Yoshino (*Prunus x yedoensis*) blossoms. The flowers are relatively large, ranging from 3 to 5 centimeters in diameter, and the petals are pale pink, fading to almost white at their tips.

There are around 300 Omura-zakura trees in Omura Park, all propagated from the original tree. A cherry blossom-viewing festival at the park takes place between late March and early April. The Omura-zakura tree in front of the main worship hall has been selected as the representative specimen of the variety and declared a National Natural Monument.