



ConsuLink

June/July 2024 Newsletter

Keeping you updated on Japan-related news in Michigan and Ohio

Lantern Festivals Popular in Saitama & Shiga

Lantern festivals are now becoming popular in various parts of the Midwest, but they have been a part of Japanese culture for centuries. The biggest lantern festival in the Kantō region (eastern central Japan) is held every year on July 12 and July 18 in the city of Kuki in Ohio's sister-state of Saitama. The Kuki Lantern Festival began over 230 years ago, as an effort to raise the townspeople's spirits after a destructive volcanic eruption. During the festival, the residents of each of Kuki's seven districts carry through the city streets huge floats decorated with paper lanterns (pictured below left) while musicians play traditional instruments. The festival runs from noon until around 10:00 each night, with hundreds of street vendors selling souvenirs, edible treats, and beverages to the thousands who attend.

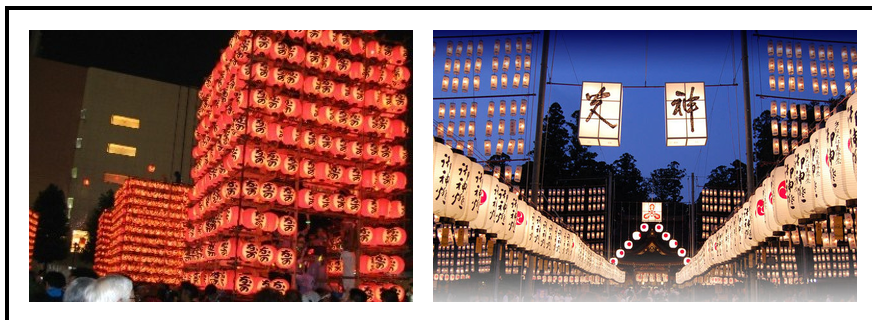


Photo credits: [Kuki City Hall](#) (left) and [Taga Taisha Shrine](#) (right)

The Mantō-sai, or Festival of 10,000 Lanterns, at Taga Taisha Shrine in Michigan's sister-state of Shiga, began centuries earlier, in ancient times. Just as the Kuki Lantern Festival is held on July 12th and 18th each year, regardless of the day of the week, the Mantō-sai is held from August 3rd through 5th each year. This lantern festival is held to show gratitude to the deity enshrined at Taga Taisha who guards ancestors' spirits. During the festival, the shrine grounds are decorated with more than 10,000 lanterns (pictured above right) donated by contributors from all across Japan, their light symbolizing the holy fire lit at Mt. Sugisaka and transported to the main shrine. Ritual ceremonies are performed in the glow of the lanterns, while visitors clad in summer yukata stroll around the shrine grounds and traditional performers and folk dancers entertain the crowds.

CALENDAR

Exhibits & Events

Through September 1:
[Promised Gifts Anniversary Show](#) @ Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Kalamazoo, MI

Mon., July 1
[Manga Mondays](#) @ Redford Branch Library, Detroit, MI

Fri., July 5
[Tanabata Festival](#) @ Japanese Cultural Center, Saginaw, MI

Sat., July 13
[Ohara Ikebana Workshop](#) @ Yokoso Center, Columbus, OH
[Cleveland Japanese Language Meetup Picnic](#) @ Willoughby Hills, OH

Sun., July 14
[Peace Bell Ringing & Taiko Performance](#) @ International Friendship Park, Cincinnati, OH

Thurs., July 18
[Warring States Period Lecture](#), Allegan District Library, Allegan, MI

Sat., July 20
[Kokeshi Dolls Come Alive event](#) @ Forest Park Library, Cincinnati, OH

Sake and Baseball Help Forge Japan-U.S. Ties

On May 28, the Consulate General of Japan in Detroit and the WMU Soga Japan Center co-hosted a Japanese Sake Lecture and Tasting event at Western Michigan University's Student Center in Kalamazoo, MI (pictured below left). First, Consul General Yusuke Shindo gave a presentation focused on the important role that sake has played in Japanese culture and history, as well as how various grades of sake are produced. Then, the guests took part in a networking reception where they could sample various types of sake and traditional Japanese dishes.



On June 9, Consul General Yusuke Shindo hosted an event at his official residence featuring Detroit Tigers pitcher, Mr. Kenta Maeda, who signed a two-year contract with the Tigers earlier this year (pictured above right). Mr. Maeda, who has previously played for the Hiroshima Toyo Carp, the Los Angeles Dodgers, and the Minnesota Twins, posed for photos with some guests, and gave out some autographs. Thank you to everyone who helped make these events successful!

Sun., July 21

[Inside the Japanese Tea House @ Meijer Gardens, Grand Rapids, MI](#)

Sat., July 27

[Bonsai Workshop @ Japanese Cultural Center, Saginaw, MI](#)

Fri.-Sun., August 9-11

[Hinoki Bicultural Family Camping @ Camp Dearborn, Milford, MI](#)

Sun., August 11

[MI-BON Summer Festival @ Cranbrook Educational Community, Bloomfield Hills, MI](#)

Sat., August 17

[JASCO Summer Japan Fest @ Dublin, OH](#)

SPOTLIGHT ON BONSAI EXPERT FROM MICHIGAN

Expert Has Cultivated Love of Bonsai for Almost 40 Years

When it comes to depth and breadth of experience with the art of bonsai, Mr. Jack Sustic (pictured below left) has very few peers. His love affair with bonsai began almost 40 years ago, when he first saw one of the miniature trees while stationed at a U.S. Army base in South Korea in the mid-1980s. He later became active in bonsai clubs in Alabama and South Carolina, and earned a degree in horticulture from Michigan State University. Mr. Sustic served as curator for many years at the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, DC, and is currently the Bonsai Specialist at the University of Michigan's Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum in Ann Arbor. Mr. Sustic's display of bonsai trees is a staple of the Japan Festival held every fall at the Japanese Cultural Center, Tea House, & Gardens in Saginaw (pictured below right), where he also regularly leads bonsai workshops.



QUICK LINKS

[Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#)



[Kizuna: The official magazine of the Government of Japan](#)

Digital publication reporting on a variety of topics, promoting stronger links between Japan and the world.

[Consulate General of Japan in Detroit](#)



Mr. Sustic has visited Japan several times, studying bonsai at such locations as Mansei-en in the Ōmiya Bonsai Village in Saitama and Daiju-en, a bonsai nursery in the city of Okazaki in Aichi prefecture. He comments: "Bonsai in Japan represent the pinnacle of this art, and to be among them is a life-changing experience for any bonsai enthusiast. Not only are the bonsai beautiful, but the people there are so kind and generous. I've been so lucky and cherish the lifelong friendships I've made in Japan."

Mr. Sustic has cared for bonsai trees up to 400 years old, and has over 60 trees in his own personal collection, one of which has been in his care since 1990. He believes that growing bonsai and caring for them through the seasons can bring people "closer to nature" and have a positive impact on their lives. He states: "I think we all can take a lesson from the reverence and respect that the people of Japan have for nature. For example, cherry blossoms are revered not only for their beauty but also their ephemeral nature, reminding us of life itself, and that we should appreciate every moment and every stage of life. I get much pleasure from maintaining my established bonsai and watching them mature with each year. I like to think that with each passing year, as my bonsai improve and mature, so do I."



ConsuLink is the official newsletter of the Consulate-General of Japan in Detroit

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