

# 32nd Annual Waimea Cherry Blossom Heritage Festival

Official Festival Art "Mejiro Amid the Blossoms" by Janice Gail

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2025  
9:00AM - 3:00PM



HISTORY AND CULTURE | DEMONSTRATIONS  
ENTERTAINMENT | ARTS & CRAFTS

SOUVENIR PROGRAM





**#WaimeaCBF**

Souvenir Booklet Design by Kathy Sprinkle

Words by Fern Gavelek

Photos Courtesy Waimea Cherry Blossom Heritage Festival

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Aloha Hawai'i County,

What an honor it is to welcome you to the 32nd Annual Waimea Cherry Blossom Heritage Festival.

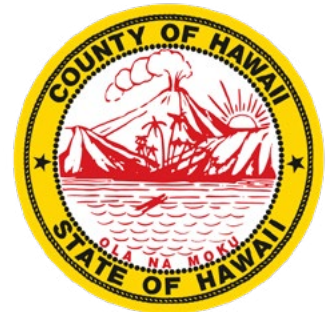
The Festival commemorates the blossoming Sakura (桜, cherry blossoms) of the original 20 Japanese cherry trees planted in 1972 by the Waimea Lions Club at Church Row Park and observes the Japanese tradition of hanami (花見), or "flower viewing."

Symbolizing both beauty and mortality, Sakura only bloom once a year for only a few weeks before falling to the ground, reminding all of us that life is fleeting and that we should strive to live life with thoughtfulness, appreciation and gratitude for the time, experiences and relationships that we have.

Speaking of appreciation and gratitude, I would like to mahalo our County of Hawai'i Parks and Recreation - Culture and Education Division for their dedication to our community and making special events like this possible. I would also like to mahalo all of our county employees, volunteers, organizations, and helping hands that put up this event for our community, and YOU – our friends, family and neighbors for coming together to celebrate this special time of the year.

Be safe, be mindful, and always the double shaka,

Dr. C. Kimo Alameda  
Mayor  
County of Hawai'i



## 2025 Festival Planning Committee

Morty Carter, Jr.-- Chairman

Elyse Stevens

Lori Lei Katahara

Bert Mukai

Margo Mau Bunnell

Justin Cabanting

Rochelle delaCruz

Colene DeMello

Fern Gavelek

Bryan Graboyes

Sharon Higuchi

Cassi Kaneda

Patti Kawamoto

Nancy Male

Jim McDonough

Amy Nishiura

Duane Puhi

Tia Revilla

Annu Shionoya

Kathy Sprinkle

Capt. Roylen Valera

Kelsey Walker

Karen Wray

Clarence Yee



# Waimea Cherry Blossom Heritage Festival Celebrates Hanami

In its 32nd year, the 2025 Waimea Cherry Blossom Heritage Festival is 9 a.m.-3 p.m. February 1 at multiple venues sprawling from the Parker Ranch Historic Homes to the historic planting of cherry trees at Church Row Park.

Delicate pink blossoms, often backdropped by a crown of snow atop Maunakea, attract thousands each year to the annual festival. Presented annually the first Saturday in February under the direction of the Culture and Education Division of the County of Hawai'i Parks and Recreation Department, the community event is a favorite with both visitors and residents alike.

At the core of the festival is the blooming of cherry trees at Church Row Park and the age-old Japanese tradition of hanami, which literally translates to hana (flower) and mi (look) or "cherry blossom viewing party." Harking from the 7th century, hanami celebrates the fleeting beauty of nature while heralding the arrival of spring.

## Cherry Trees Arrive in Waimea in 1953

Cherry trees first came to Waimea in 1953 as a living memorial to Fred Makino, founder of Hawai'i's former Japanese language newspaper, *Hawaii Hochi*. The late Isami Ishihara, a noted Waimea gardener, bonsai master and festival volunteer, propagated more trees. He donated the seedlings to the Waimea Lions Club for community beautification and the club received permission from the county to plant the trees in 1972 at Church Row Park.

Through the years, the Waimea Lions Club nurtured the trees—which aren't native to Hawai'i—replacing those that died. The late Hisao Kimura, who was a professional agronomist, was instrumental in laying the groundwork for the partnership between the county and the club in caring for the trees. Church Row Park is currently home to 75-some trees. During the festival, the Lions Club offers an informative photo display chronicling the club's planting efforts through the years.



### Festival Portal QR includes:

- Digital version of Souvenir Program
- Activity Line-up and Festival Map
- Entertainment Schedule

## Festival Founded in 1994

Under the direction of former county Parks and Recreation Director George Yoshida, the festival originated in 1994 in Church Row Park and has evolved over the years to involve numerous community organizations providing fun activities throughout town.

While activities and locations vary each year, the festival offers plenty of hands-on fun: mochi pounding, bonsai demonstrations, origami making, traditional Japanese tea ceremonies, bon dancing and more. While many venues are within walking distance of each other, Roberts Hawaii graciously provides free shuttle service among select locations.

Attendees are treated to a wide range of local entertainment including taiko drumming, hula and Chinese lion dance, plus sometimes headliners from Japan delight festival goers with authentic Japanese costume, dance, song and instrumentation. Stages outside Parker Ranch Center, Waimea Center, Church Row Park and Pukalani Stables present a wide range of local and ethnic performing arts. Attendees can shop among numerous craft vendors, a farmer's market, tables of Asian-themed collectibles, cherry tree blossoms and cherry-themed art.

All the activities spur the appetite and festival goers enjoy free samplings at staged cooking demonstrations by local chefs. Hungry attendees make their way among numerous broke-da-mouth food booths, Asian baked goods like andagi and refreshing shave ice.

## Official Festival Honorees and Art

Since 2007, the festival has often celebrated persons or organizations within the community—whether they are community volunteers, leaders, businesses or colorful characters involved with the festival—as official honorees. This year's honoree is the late Ruth Dick of Waimea Bon-yu Kai Bonsai Club. In addition, the Waimea Arts Council (WAC) facilitates a contest for the festival's official annual art that appears on this booklet's cover and the event poster that can be purchased for \$10 at Firehouse Gallery. WAC also presents the 32nd annual Cherry Blossom Exhibit, "Big Island Blooms" at Firehouse Gallery, located at Waimea's Historic Corner.



## Festival Information at Your Fingertips

This Souvenir Booklet shares information on the many community organizations and volunteers who collaborate to present the Waimea Cherry Blossom Heritage Festival. For the full lineup of things to do, pick up the free, one-page handout titled "2025 Festival Activity Lineup" at festival venues. It is also available online in the Festival Portal; use the QR code in this booklet to access that link. Mahalo!



## Parker Ranch Center

Parker Ranch Center is thrilled to once again be a major participant with the annual Waimea Cherry Blossom Heritage Festival for 2025. Visitors to this year's festival can enjoy shopping, dining and entertainment while experiencing the stunning aromas, views and colors of the 32nd Cherry Blossom Festival. Located in the heart of Waimea, the center offers plenty of parking.

Parker Ranch Center is part of the 250,000-acre Parker Ranch, one of the nation's oldest and largest cattle ranches. The center was built to serve the needs of the ranchers and their families who made their livelihood on the ranch.

Originally opened in 1968, Parker Ranch Center was reconfigured and designed to an award-winning architectural standard in 2002. It is anchored by local island grocer Foodland and local health food store Healthway's. Signature tenants include Starbucks, Patisserie Nanako, Mahina, Village Burger and Waimea's only food court.

Located in the heart of Hawai'i's paniolo country, Parker Ranch Center invites festival goers to visit the nine-ton "Ikua Purdy Rides Again" statue, courtesy of the Paniolo Preservation Society and located near the Center's Mamalahoa Highway 19 entrance. Purdy was the 1908 World Champion Roper who was inducted into the National Cowboy Hall of Fame. Inside the center's Fireside Food Court, 32 paniolo murals, painted by local artist Marcia Ray, colorfully adorn the walls. The history of Parker Ranch and Waimea is rich and captivating. It's a story of the land, of the melding of cultures, of cowboys and of community spirit.

## The W. M. Keck Observatory

The W. M. Keck Observatory telescopes are among the largest, most scientifically productive on Earth. Research conducted from atop Maunakea on Hawai'i Island using Keck Observatory's two, 10-meter optical/infrared telescopes have led to groundbreaking discoveries—two of which won Nobel Prizes in Physics: one in 2011 for the discovery of the accelerating expansion of the universe and another in 2020 for conclusive evidence of a supermassive black hole at the center of our Milky Way galaxy.



*Keck Observatory Domes atop Maunakea  
by Ethan Tweedie Photography*

Keck Observatory is a non-profit organization operated as a scientific partnership between Caltech, University of California, and NASA. Its twin telescopes, equipped with cutting-edge technology, enable astronomers around the world to observe the deepest and darkest regions of space, unraveling celestial mysteries.

Inspired by the awe and wonder of the universe and deeply committed to Hawai'i's community, Keck Observatory's 140-plus employees are dedicated to sharing the knowledge learned from Maunakea, fostering curiosity and exploration through science engagement, community citizenship, and workforce development. The front lawn of the observatory's Waimea headquarters offers activities during the Waimea Cherry Blossom Heritage Festival.

Learn more: [www.keckobservatory.org](http://www.keckobservatory.org)



## North Hawai'i Bon Dancers Accompanied by Kona Hongwanji Taiko Drummers

Bon Odori (Bon Dance) originates from the story of a Buddhist disciple who envisioned his deceased mother in the Realm of Hungry Ghosts where she was indulging in her own selfishness. Greatly disturbed, the disciple went to Buddha and asked how he could release his mother from this realm.

Buddha advised his disciple to perform a charitable act in memory of his mother. The disciple did this and thus saw

his mother's release. He also began to see the true nature of her past unselfishness and the many sacrifices she had made for him. The disciple, happy for his mother's release and grateful for his mother's kindness, danced with joy.

This dance of joy is Bon Odori, a time when ancestors and their sacrifices are remembered and appreciated. During the festival, the North Hawai'i Bon Dancers will perform traditional Bon Odori movements in lines fronting the entertainment stage in the back parking lot at Parker Ranch Center. They will be accompanied by the Kona Hongwanji Taiko Group. The public is welcome to join in.



## Urasenke Hilo Association

The Urasenke Hilo Association annually participates in the festival by offering Chanoyu, the Japanese Tea Ceremony. Chado, “The Way of Tea, is based “on the simple act of boiling water, making tea, offering it to others and drinking of it ourselves.” Powdered matcha tea is used, which is whipped into hot water and served “with a respectful heart while received with gratitude.”



The Urasenke Hilo Chapter (Urasenke Hilo Association) was established in 1971. It meets and (hopefully) teaches regularly at the landmark Shoroan (Pine Ocean) Tea House on the beautiful grounds of Lili'uokalani Gardens in Hilo.

Through practice and experience of Chanoyu, each practitioner seeks to attain the four essential virtues. They are “wa,” which is harmony; ‘kei’ is respect, “sei” is purity and “jaku” is tranquility or the peace of mind that comes with the realization of the first three principles of the philosophy of wabi, meaning quiet or sober refinement.

The Urasenke Hilo Association invites festival goers to be a guest at a traditional Chanoyu and enjoy the serenity of a bowl of tea. The chapter offers several tea ceremonies during the festival 11 a.m.-3 p.m. at Parker Ranch Historic Homes.

## Waimea KTA Super Stores

KTA Super Stores started in 1916, as a modest, 500 square-foot grocery and dry goods store, by Koichi and Taniyo Taniguchi. Since then, KTA has grown to a nine-store chain, serving the residents of Hawai'i island. For over 100 years, KTA Super Stores has been committed to our founder's philosophy, which is a commitment to humbly serve the people of our community.



KTA Waimea opened in 1989 to serve the community of Kamuela, later expanding and renovating in 2002. KTA is proud to be a regular venue participant in the festival, often doing food demonstrations and other activities.



## Roberts Hawaii

Roberts Hawaii, which is now an Employee Owned (EO) company, has provided complimentary shuttle services to venues of the Waimea Cherry Blossom Heritage Festival for years. The Hawai'i Island team has a sense of "kuleana" (responsibility) still to its hometown community because of the former owners, the Iwamoto Family.



"We are happy to watch the success of this festival and its growth over the years," says Margo Bunnell, Roberts GM of Hawai'i Island. "Our commitment to these types of events is to always be good partners to these grass-root festivals to help preserve the mixed cultures found in the Hawaiian Islands."

Bunnell adds, "When this festival started 32 years ago for just the pure enjoyment of 'hanami,' the viewing of the beautiful flowers of the cherry blossom trees, we were so fortunate the community wanted to expand this event throughout the Waimea town. Roberts Hawaii will always be here for the community and to be part of this major event, which has brought a small town like Waimea to host this time-honored Japanese tradition."

"Where else in the world can one see the magnificent Mauna Kea as the backdrop for these wonderful 'hot pink' cherry blossoms in full bloom in February?," she concludes.

## Kamuela Hardwoods

Debating at the 2025 festival, Kamuela Hardwoods recently opened a Waimea showroom in the former Parker Ranch Slaughterhouse behind Mana Christian 'Ohana (old Kahilu Town Hall). Founded in 2010, Kamuela Hardwoods received the prestigious County of Hawai'i Mayor's Sustainability Achievement Award in 2021 for advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.



Led by Waimea co-owners Alex Woodbury and International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) certified arborist Joshua Greenspan, the company "takes pride in reclaiming, recovering and salvaging wood that would otherwise be burned, chipped or thrown in our landfills." Local silk oak, Japanese (Sugi) pine, monkey pod, Norfolk Island pine, mango, koa, jacaranda, 'ohi'a and more are milled at a facility south of town and sold at the showroom as lumber, distinctive live-edge slabs, bowl turning blanks and more. Also at the showroom is hand-crafted finished furniture and gift items.

During the festival, take a guided tour in the showroom to learn about the attributes of different local wood species and participate in a casual workshop teaching woodworking skills. Enjoy the First Saturday Artisan's Hui offering local paintings, wood-carvings and rugs. Parking available on grounds of showroom. Info: <https://kamuelahardwoods.com>

## Kamuela Farmers Market

The Kamuela Farmers Market was founded December 2015 by a group of vendors who had been working together in Waimea for many years. The goal was to establish a place for the community to gather and support small and local family owned businesses. The market is held at the idyllic historic Pukalani Stables, which was part of the original Pukalani Village in the 19th century and located at 67-139 Pukalani Road in Waimea.



Over the past seven years, the Kamuela Farmers Market has grown to more than 50 vendors offering some of the island's best locally grown produce, "grindz" and goods. Known as "The Heartbeat and Gathering Place of Waimea," the Kamuela Farmers Market has hosted many outstanding musicians and performances at special events and is honored to be an official participant of the 32nd annual Waimea Cherry Blossom Festival.

In 2025, the Market is offering a lineup of entertainment and partnering with the Holo Holo Ku at Parker Ranch Homeowners Association to provide festival activities, including the Cherry Choo Choo by Kohala Mountain Express. The keiki train rides are from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. for \$5 at Holo Holo Ku at Parker Ranch next to Pukalani Stables.



## Holo Holo Ku at Parker Ranch Homeowners Association

Holo Holo Ku at Parker Ranch strives to set an example of how condominium associations can stay involved with its neighbors. Working alongside some of the other non-profits in the Waimea area, Holo Holo Ku at Parker Ranch assists Pukalani Stables, the local

farmers markets and other public events to create a space for Waimea and the Big Island to enjoy. Many of the Holo Holo Ku at Parker Ranch community members also volunteer around town, stay active with social and community gatherings, and support the greater Waimea area and Hawai'i through different philanthropic endeavors.

For info on the Kamuela Farmers Market, visit [kamuelafarmersmarket.com](http://kamuelafarmersmarket.com).

## Kohala Mountain Express

The Kohala Mountain Express chugs into Waimea to again offer its trackless keiki train rides at Holo Holo Ku at Parker Ranch next to Pukalani Stables. Train Engineer Clarence Yee of Hawi drives the 10-barrel train that is powered by an authentic looking locomotive (some say it resembles Thomas the Train!). Scenic rides aboard the Cherry Choo Choo are a delight for young children and offer great photo opps! Passengers are charged a nominal fee and the Kohala Mountain Express operates 9 a.m.-3 p.m. All Aboard!



## The Historic Spencer House

The Historic Spencer House has been a Waimea landmark for over 180 years. Still owned by the Spencer family, the original home was built in 1840 and boasts being the first western-style house in the area. A kitchen, bathroom and additional rooms were added later. While most of the family furniture has been dispersed, there are some portraits on the walls, as well as ghost stories that typically accompany all old houses.



Over the years, the Spencer House has been a family home, a hotel, a law office and a restaurant. It has also accommodated various offices and businesses. Some parts of the house are currently under repair, but visitors are welcome to walk through most of the building's ground floor to appreciate its historical significance and vintage craftsmanship. E komo mai!

## Parker Ranch Historic Homes

In the scenic, pastoral countryside of Waimea, Parker Ranch's two historic homes, Pu'uopelu and Mana Hale, still reside among the green hills and windswept pastures. These beautiful homes tell the Parker family's story through historic heirlooms and works of art. The homes are open for free to the public for self-guided tours during the Waimea Cherry Blossom Heritage Festival.

Mana Hale, the two-story, "saltbox" koa-wood house that John Palmer Parker built—almost ship-like with its small rooms, narrow staircase, and low ceilings—was moved from its original location to sit side-by-side with the more elaborate Pu'uopelu.

Purchased by John Parker II in 1879, the "Hawaiian Victorian" manor house served as the family home through sixth generation heir Richard Smart, who surrounded it with flower gardens and filled it with his extensive art collection, family portraits, antiques and treasures from world travels.

Take a tour of the historic homes of Parker Ranch, a family dynasty that began nearly 200 years ago, with deep roots in the land and intricate ties to the history and monarchy of Hawai'i. Upon arrival, you will receive a self-guided tour pamphlet to guide you through the historic homes, gardens, and grounds.

During the festival, attendees can also browse a selection of Parker Ranch-branded and cherry-blossom themed merchandise. Also in Pu'uopelu, there will be a feather lei display.

With the exception of festival day on February 1, reservations and availability are booked online, visit <https://parkerranch.com/waimea/explore-self-guided-tours/>.



# Waimea Cherry Blossom Heritage Festival

9:00am - 3:00pm | Saturday, February 1, 2025



FREE Shuttle Bus Stop



Recommended Event Parking Area



Food Available



Public Restrooms



Art & Activities

## Parker Ranch Historic Homes



- Open House
- Tea Ceremony
- Merchandise Sales

## Waimea's Historic Center



### Firehouse Gallery

- Cherry Blossom Art Show
- All-ages Chalk Art

### Waimea Preservation Association

- Open House
- Chess Fair on giant 20 ft. chess board!

## Thelma Parker Library



- All Ages - Cherry Blossom Haiku & Watercolor

## Parker School Theater

- Asian Music and Dance

## Waimea



### KTA Super S

- Food sale

### Waimea Center

- Koto, Taiko
- 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

### Historic Spreads

- Vintage
- Kokeshi Displays





## Historic Church Row Park



Cherry Blossom Trees & Entertainment  
 Waimea Lions Club

- Festival History, T-shirt Sales, Lost & Found

Kamuela Hongwanji Open House

- Chef Demos & Tasting
- Asian Food Booths, Sales
- Pop-Up Retailers

Waimea Bon-yu Kai Bonsai Club

Display, Demonstrations, Sales

Kamuela Liquor Store

- Sake Tasting noon-3 p.m.

Craft  
 y  
**a Center**

Stores Waimea  
 mpling until 1p.m.  
 nter's Center Court  
 iko, Lion Dance, Jazz  
 1:30 p.m.  
 ncer House  
 Kimono, Obi  
 Doll  
 s

**Keck Headquarters**

- Solar Telescope Viewing & Festival Craft Fair

**P**  
**Parker Ranch Center**



Festival Entertainment Stage:  
 In the Center's back parking lot.  
 9 a.m. blessing opens festival

- Bon Dance
- Mochi Pounding with Kona Hongwanji
- Taiko Drumming
- Local Entertainment
- Craft Fair in back lot and throughout Center



To Honoko'a  
 & Hilo

Pukalani Road

**hana Hall  
 oods**

s Craft Fair  
 : Artisan's Hui  
 Grass



**Pukalani Stables**



**Holo Holo Ku  
 at Parker Ranch**

- Kohala Mountain Express



**Kamuela Farmers Market**

- 70 food and product vendors
- Cherry branches, tree sales
- Entertainment
- Face Painting



## Kamuela Hongwanji Mission

Kamuela Hongwanji Mission is located at 65-1110 Mamalahoa Highway fronting Waimea's Historic Church Row Park. Established in 1954, the temple was originally called Waimea Hongwanji. The name was changed to Kamuela Hongwanji Mission in 1969, so as not to confuse it with Waimea Hongwanji on Kaua'i.



The temple is a Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temple and is one of 33 temples in Hawai'i associated with Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawai'i in Honolulu. It also maintains close ties with the Nishi Hongwanji head temple in Kyoto, Japan. Rev. Masanari Yamagishi is the resident minister of Kamuela Hongwanji and also serves as the minister for Honoka'a, Kohala and Pa'auilo Hongwanji.

For this year's festival, Kamuela Hongwanji will host its temple open house with Rev. Masanari Yamagishi. He will explain Shin Buddhism rituals and chanting to visitors. Guests are invited to sign the guest book. Kamuela Hongwanji will offer a concession stand with Asian foods such as bento, chichi mochi, Okinawan andagi and more. Plus, the temple's social hall will be hosting several cooking demonstrations by guest chefs from island restaurants and more activities.

## Kona Hongwanji Buddhist Temple

The Kona Hongwanji Temple annually provides a "hands-on" demonstration of mochi tsuki (mochi pounding) during the festival and offers attendees complimentary mochi treats made from the freshly pounded mochi. The treats are flavored with either red bean paste (anko), peanut butter or a soybean powder with sugar (kinako).

Mochi making is a multi-day process. Rice must be washed and rinsed, all wooden equipment soaked, the rice cooked and then pounded. Mochi is believed to symbolize unity and strength because of its sticky consistency. Since mochi rice is pounded, it lasts much longer than ordinary cooked rice and is therefore associated with longevity.



The Kona Hongwanji Buddhist Temple is located in Kealakekua and celebrated 125 years in 2022. The Temple aspires to be the leading Buddhist center for West Hawai'i by providing:

- spiritual guidance and support for living in the 21st century
- propagation programs and activities appealing to people of all ages and ethnicities
- a resource center for Pure Land/Jodo Shin Buddhism.





## Thelma Parker Memorial Public and School Library

Thelma Parker Memorial Library first opened its doors in Waimea in 1951 on land donated to the County of Hawai'i by the world-famous Parker Ranch and its owner, Richard Palmer Kaleioku Smart. Smart named the library after his mother, Annie Thelma Kahiluonapua'api'ilani Parker. In 1978, the State of Hawai'i opened a new and larger Thelma Parker Memorial Public and School Library (TPMPSL) near its original location and is located at 67-1209 Mamalahoa Highway.

The popular library continues to serve patrons—residents and visitors alike—from a wide geographic area. TPMPSL has the longest name of all 51 libraries in the Hawai'i State Public Library System and is the sole state library without a location name.

The facility boasts being the only library in the state selected (in 2017) to be part of the NASA@My Library initiative to promote STEM learning in the community. E komo mai!



## Kamuella Liquor Store

This long-time liquor store and festival participant is a Waimea landmark located on Hwy. 19 when driving toward Honoka'a. Owner Alvin Wakayama hosts sake tasting for festival goers from noon to 3 p.m.

The recreational beverage and snack needs of the Waimea community have been supplied by several generations of the Wakayama family. Around 1938, Jitsuji Wakayama erected the Kamuella Theatre next door to the then I. Oda Store to expand entertainment offerings once held at I. Oda. Although recollections are varied, the theatre presented dramatic Japanese touring companies, movies and community events. One newspaper article shared about I. Oda described a shibai (farce), performed by locals whose costumes were made by wives of Parker Ranch workers. After WWII, the theatre was discontinued and the operation was devoted to selling beverages.

The store, then overseen by Jitsuji's son, Tetsuro, became known as the Kamuella Liquor Store and the business was established in 1946. Tetsuro married Yukie, the daughter of a noted paniolo from Parker Ranch. Today, Tetsuro's son Alvin continues to operate the store.

Through the years, Kamuella Liquor Store has offered a wide range of spirits, fine wines and beers. In addition, shoppers enjoy a food selection of gourmet products including boutique cheeses and condiments, plus typical snacks.



## Waimea Bon-yu Kai Bonsai Club

In 2025, the Waimea Bon-yu Kai Bonsai Club will be entering its 69th year as an active bonsai club. Waimea Bon-yu Kai continues to be an active group in the community and has participated in every Cherry Blossom Festival held in Waimea. The late Isami Ishihara of Waimea was a founding club member as well as the planter of the original cherry trees in Church Row Park.

"In bonsai, the main thing is the Three Point Rule," Mr. Ishihara once shared. He described it as the bonsai having a triangular shape with the top apex, or point, actually at the top. "You also see this in Japanese flower arranging," he added. The triangle's points are called "heaven, man and earth," he continued. "The bottom is earth, the foundation; it is strong."

During the festival, visit the Bonsai Club booths in Church Row Park and talk story with the members. There will be bonsai plants on display, bonsai for sale, and an ongoing clinic and demonstrations to discuss and work on any bonsai you may have.

To learn more, the club invites the public to attend one of its monthly meetings offered 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. every fourth Sunday of the month, except December, at the Waimea Community Center. For more information, email [WaimeaBonsai@gmail.com](mailto:WaimeaBonsai@gmail.com).





## Ruth Dick is 2025 Festival Honoree

The 2025 festival honors the late Ruth Dick, who was a long-time festival participant as a member of Waimea Bon-yu Kai Bonsai Club. A Waimea resident and active club member, the Kaua'i native annually exhibited her plants to the delight of festival goers. Year after year, she expertly offered bonsai care demonstrations and served as a volunteer plant doctor during the festival.

Mrs. Dick started practicing the art of bonsai in the 1980s, under the tutelage of late Bon-yu Kai members Isami Ishihara and Yutaka Kimura.



"I think the art of bonsai enabled my mom to connect with and honor her Japanese heritage," shares daughter Michiko Spencer of Waimea. "My mom was always a plant person and bonsai opened a new door for her creativity as well."

Spencer, who has assumed the care of her mother's impressive bonsai collection, has joined Waimea Bon-yu Kai to learn the skills "to importantly keep the plants alive," but adds the process provides a form of closure after her mother's death "as I know my caring for them would make her happy."







Aloha kākou,

It is with great pride that I welcome you to the 32nd Annual Waimea Cherry Blossom Heritage Festival on behalf of the Waimea community. This festival is an expression of our deep-rooted traditions, blending of culture, and spirit of pilina that defines us. We are honored to host many friends, old and new, from near and far to share in the excitement of this day.

For over six decades, Waimea has been home to cherry blossom trees that line Church Row and dot the landscape, a breathtaking symbol of our unique blend of history and nature. It is wonderful to reflect on how the festival has grown, becoming a beloved tradition to celebrate each year.

This festival embodies the heart of Waimea and would not be possible without the dedication of countless volunteers, local organizations, and the County of Hawai'i, Department of Parks & Recreation – Culture & Education Division. Their commitment and aloha are what make this event possible, and we are deeply grateful for their contributions to our community.

As we celebrate the Japanese tradition of hanami, the viewing and appreciation of cherry blossoms, we are reminded of the beauty of nature, the strength of our shared heritage, and the blessings of coming together. I hope you will take a moment to sit beneath the cherry blossom trees with family and friends to create lasting memories.

We look forward to sharing this day with you all. Thank you for taking part in this Waimea tradition.

Mahalo nui,

James E. Hustace  
Hawai'i County Council Member  
District 9 - North and South Kohala

## Asian Dance and Music

The performing arts of Japan returns to the Waimea Cherry Blossom Heritage Festival during a presentation of dance and music entitled “Sakura Beauty and Spirit” 2 p.m. at the Parker School Theatre. The sakura, or cherry blossom, is the national flower of Japan and represents a springtime sense of renewal and optimism.

Dances and choreography are by the Shizuno Nasu Dance Institute of Japan while Annu Shoko Shionoya, who teaches and performs piano on the Big Island, coordinates participating local musicians and artists. On lyre (a harp-like instrument), is Miyuki Ikesue, who has appeared in concert in Japan, Europe and the US. She will play solo and leads a group of other lyrists. Also on stage will be local performers flutist Manuel Roberto and pianist Shionoya. Decorating the stage will be a painting by Susumu Sakaguchi.



## Parker School Theatre

The historic Parker School Theatre primarily serves as the learning center of Parker School’s performing arts classes and productions, as well as a gathering place for the school’s events and meetings. The theatre also functions as a unique community venue shared by visiting presenters such as performing groups, theatre companies, film festivals and non-profit organizations.

Parker School is a non-profit, independent, co-educational day school located in the heart of Waimea. It provides a college-preparatory program, emphasizing personal and educational excellence, for 342 students in grades K-12. The small class sizes, the ‘ohana—or family-like—atmosphere, and the diverse, caring and talented faculty combine to produce a rewarding educational experience for students destined to make the most of their lives.

# Waimea Lions Club

Guided by their motto, "We Serve," the men and women of the Waimea Lions Club have dedicated themselves to community service since February 11th, 1955. This non-profit organization played a significant role in the beautification of Church Row Park by planting its first cherry blossom trees in 1972.

During the annual Waimea Cherry Blossom Festival, the Waimea Lions Club provides a glimpse into this legacy with a large photo display showcasing the original tree plantings. They also operate the festival's official Lost and Found station. In 2025, the club debuts Cherry Blossom Festival t-shirts and tote bags for sale, offering two designs: a natural off-white with a pinkish-red design and a comfortable navy with a white design. Shirts are available in adult unisex sizes S through 3XL, while supplies last. Profits made during the sale go back into the Waimea community.

Beyond the festival, the Waimea Lions Club actively supports the community through various initiatives. The organization has assisted the local Blood Bank by managing the canteen and operated a volunteer snack shop during the Boy Scout Makahiki. The club is primarily committed to vision care, conducting school screenings and collecting used eyeglasses for redistribution.

The Waimea Lions Club warmly welcomes new members passionate about community service. To learn more, contact them at [bigiwaimealions@gmail.com](mailto:bigiwaimealions@gmail.com), visit <https://eclubhouse.org/sites/waimea> and follow WaimeaLionsClub50 on Facebook.





## So-shin Kai Koto

Based in Hilo, So-shin Kai is a group of koto students under the instruction of Darin Miyashiro that performs at the Waimea Cherry Blossom Heritage Festival. Last year, the group wowed attendees with a performance in the atrium at Waimea Center. Check the QR code for the 2025 Festival Activity Lineup in this booklet for this year's times and locations.

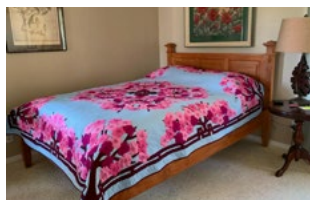
The koto is an ancient Japanese zither-type instrument with 13 strings and moveable bridges. It measures up to six feet long and a foot wide and is played with picks, called tsume. Said to "represent a dragon," the koto is related to the Chinese guzheng and Korean gayageum. Considered by some to be the national instrument of Japan, the koto has been played for over 1,000 years there. Since the Meiji Era (1868-1912), many new koto pieces have been composed. Koto music often expresses meaningful Japanese customs or seasons, including the sakura or cherry blossom season.



## Kravin' Munchies Craft Fair & Quilt Display

Kravin' Munchies of Hilo brings its line of tasty goodies to Waimea at Mana Christian 'Ohana (Old Kahilu Town Hall) for a craft fair and quilt display. Owned by Cassi Kaneda and Tia Revilla, Kravin' creates freshly packaged gourmet flavored popcorns, furikake munchies, cotton candy, li hing mui lollipops and ube crinkle cookies that can be found at Lani's Island Snack Shack in downtown Hilo.

The Kravin' Munchies Craft Fair & Quilt Display also offers local designer clothing and artisan gift items. Find apparel, handbags, fine jewelry, art work, engraved chopping boards, drinking cups and unique island finds in a lively emporium atmosphere.



*Photo Credit:  
Courtesy Tina Martinson*

Attendees are invited on stage to view an exhibit of local patchwork and Hawaiian quilts. See the Sakura Quilt, designed and stitched by late

members of the former Ka Hui Kapa Apana Waimea quilt club.

Follow Kravin' Munchies on Facebook and Instagram, @kravinmunchies.

## Waimea's Historic Corner



Waimea's Historic Corner—at the crossroads of Hwys. 19 and 190 on the corner of Mamalahoa Hwy. and Lindsey Rd.—will have a number of activities during this year's festival. Almost 100 years ago, the Historic Corner served as Waimea's civic center. It's hard to imagine the small buildings on the Historic Corner housed the tax assessor's office, the courthouse, the library, the gym, and the firehouse. **The Waimea Senior Club** and **Hawai'i County Elderly Activities Nutrition Program** (Lily Yoshimatsu Senior Center) currently uses the former district courthouse and the fire chief's residence is being considered for senior crafts programs.

The **Waimea Preservation Association** (WPA) is a local nonprofit focused on "Heritage, Community and Prosperity." WPA is a community resource center located in the tiny, former territorial Tax Office Building. Current projects include caring for historic Minuke'ole Park behind Parker Ranch Center, supporting the Waimea Chess Club and establishing headquarters for the Friendly Fridge food distribution serving the needy. WPA also collaborates with other organizations, such as the Rotary Club of North Hawai'i, with its Peace Pole project and insurance coverage for community events like Waimea's Christmas

Twilight Parade. Join WPA during the Cherry Blossom Festival for an open house and a chess fair on the big 20-foot-square chess board at the corner.

Since the 1980s, the **Waimea Arts Council** (WAC) has occupied the former bunkhouse for Waimea's firemen and the garage that housed the fire truck. North Hawai'i's oldest arts organization was founded in 1974 to stimulate and encourage the growth of arts. The council brings people together through its various programs and events and fosters community through the arts. WAC is one of the founding groups that started the Cherry Blossom Festival 32 years ago.

The Waimea Arts Council also operates the on-site **Firehouse Gallery**, a venue for local artists to display and sell their work. The artists donate a percentage of their sales to support community arts programs. The gallery is sponsoring the 32nd annual Cherry Blossom Exhibition, "Big Island Blooms," in January and February. Local artists will have originals and prints available for sale, including the 2025 festival poster. The gallery is open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday through Sunday and "whenever the flags are flying!" Learn more at [www.WaimeaArtsCouncil.org](http://www.WaimeaArtsCouncil.org).

# Janice Gail Painting Selected as 2025 Festival Art



"Mejiro Amid the Blossoms" by Janice Gail of Honoka'a is the official art for the 2025 Waimea Cherry Blossom Heritage Festival. The painting was selected from a field of 11 entries by the festival's community planning committee.

The winning art appears on both the cover of the festival's souvenir booklet and the 2025 festival poster. Purchase the poster for \$10 at Waimea's Firehouse Gallery where Gail will sign posters during the February 1st festival. Also on display and for sale will be Gail's original 12X16 painting.

A self-taught artist who began drawing and painting as a child, Gail says the concept of "Mejiro Amid the Blossoms" came from her "love of the lighter-colored cherry blossoms" that bloom on a couple trees at Waimea's Church Row Park. Describing the painting she shares, "The mejiro, or Japanese White Eye, is a common backyard bird and placing it perched on a cherry blossom branch is fitting. I added a snow-topped Mauna Kea as I often see that image in my mind."

Drawn to the spirit of Hawai'i's people, Gail moved to the Aloha State in 1982 from California and soon settled in Waimea. Attracted to the area's paniolo and plantation architecture, these became her first artistic subjects and watercolors her medium. Her renderings, also including seascapes, landscapes, still life and marine life, were featured at galleries in Kona and Waimea.

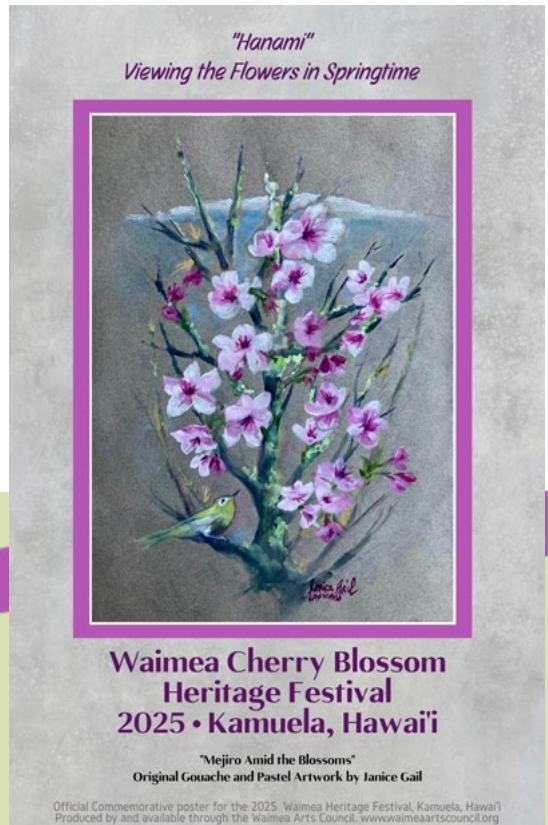
Since 1989, the award-winning artist has been teaching privately and at resorts, also serving as an instructor with the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts for 16 years. Today, the octogenarian also works in oils and does watercolor with collage, adding that most of her commissions are in watercolor.

"It is a profound and abiding love of making art that keeps me going—and a monumental gratitude to the Creator, that gave me whatever talent I may have," she concludes. Find her work at [www.janicegailart.com](http://www.janicegailart.com).

**Limited Edition**  
only \$10

**Official Collector's Poster**

The 17x11" poster is only available at the Firehouse Gallery. Find them on Facebook: Firehouse Gallery & Waimea Arts Council  
808-877-1052 [www.WaimeaArtsCouncil.org](http://www.WaimeaArtsCouncil.org)





# Mahalo!

The Waimea Cherry Blossom Heritage Festival is produced by the Hawai'i County Parks and Recreation's Culture and Education Division. At the helm is event coordinator Morty Carter Jr.

Presented at numerous venues throughout Waimea, the free festival is a community-wide effort staged by a dedicated team of organizations, individuals and businesses. Mahalo to those who pitched in to produce the 2025 festival!

- Hawai'i County Mayor Kimo Alameda & Mayor's Office
- Hawai'i County Councilman James Hustace
- Annu Shinoya—Classic Japanese Music & Dance
- CJ's Promotions
- Fern Gavelek Communications
- Hawai'i County Fire & Police Departments
- Hawai'i County Parks & Recreation Department
- Hawai'i County Public Works Department
- Historic Spencer House
- Holo Holo Ku at Parker Ranch Homeowners Association
- Islandwide Canopy Tents
- Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i
- Kamuela Farmers Market
- Kamuela Hardwoods
- Kamuela Hongwanji Mission
- Kamuela Liquor Store
- Kathy Sprinkle
- Kohala Mountain Express—Train Rides
- Kona Hongwanji Buddhist Temple—Mochi Pounding
- Kravin' Munchies
- KTA Super Stores
- Parker Ranch Center (M&J Wilkow Properties, LLC)
- Parker Ranch Historic Homes
- Parker School Theatre
- Roberts Hawaii-Free Shuttles
- So-shin Kai Koto
- Thelma Parker Memorial Library
- Urasenke Hilo Association—Tea Ceremony
- Waimea Arts Council—Firehouse Gallery
- Waimea Bon-yu Kai Bonsai Club
- Waimea Lions Club
- Waimea Preservation Association
- W. M. Keck Observatory



***"Sakura Bonsai and Mauna Kea" by Wilfred Fujimoto  
4 x 11 Acrylic Painting  
Runner up winner of the Waimea Arts Council's  
annual Cherry Blossom Invitational Contest.***

*This painting and others are available for purchase  
at the Firehouse Gallery.*