

John Kelly Park: Honoring History and Cultural Exchange in Lakeview

Overview:

John Kelly Park, a long, narrow park in Lakeview, honors neighborhood resident Private First Class John H. Kelly, who was killed in action in France during World War II. The park also serves as a key connection between the Cubs parking lots and Wrigley Field, welcoming tens of thousands of visitors during each home game.

Goal:

This project aims to create a designated and recognized community marker in Lakeview for the local Chicago Japanese community by incorporating Japanese elements into John Kelly Park. Kelly Park could serve as the starting point for a broader initiative to reconnect the Japanese community to its historical origins in the area and educate Lakeview residents, and Chicago as a whole, about this important history and its significance to the US-Japan relationship.

Park Improvements (See Attachments):

- 31 flowering and ornamental trees - \$40k
- Milky Way decorative concrete pavement (Tanabata-inspired) - \$50k
- Custom granite stone "bridge" (Tanabata-inspired) - \$75k
- Signage (See Attachments): These elements will be placed at the park's two main entrances to acknowledge the neighborhood's and Chicago's historic connection to the Japanese community, as well as the enduring friendship and support between the United States and Japan. ○ Two options are being considered:
 - Standard CPD signage (estimated \$5k)
 - Japanese-style signage (price pending)

Park & Community Programming:

The Chicago Park District, Park Advisory Council, and Japanese Culture Center are enthusiastic about supporting Japanese seasonal cultural programming in Kelly Park, including Kodomo no Hi (Children's Day), Tanabata (Star Festival), and Tsukimi (Moon Viewing Festival).

Tree Plans - A Symbol of the US-Japan Relationship Throughout the Year

In 1912, the United States received a gift of cherry blossom trees from Japan as a symbol of friendship. This gesture was reciprocated in 1915 when the US gifted dogwood trees to Japan (a gift repeated in 2015). Kelly Park will feature these symbolic trees at its entrances: cherry blossoms to the north and dogwoods to the south. Planting them in these prominent locations emphasizes their significance and creates focal points for spring celebrations (hanami).

The rest of the garden will be thoughtfully planted with other species significant in Japanese culture, chosen for blooms throughout the year, ensuring visitors can enjoy the garden's beauty in every season. Additional trees will complement and enhance the blooming periods of the Japanese flora.

Quantity	Tree Name	Notes	Season
3	Kanzan Cherry Trees (<i>Prunus serrulata</i> 'Kanzan')	Cherry blossoms (sakura) are arguably the most iconic symbol of Japan. They represent the fleeting beauty of life, as their blooms are short-lived. Kanzan cherries are particularly popular for their double blossoms, creating a profusion of pink in spring.	Spring
2	Kousa Dogwood (<i>Cornus kousa</i>)	While not native to Japan, the Kousa Dogwood is appreciated for its beautiful white bracts in spring and its red berries in autumn, providing year-round interest.	Spring
3	Jane Magnolia (<i>Magnolia</i> 'Jane')	Magnolias are often incorporated into Japanese gardens for their large, fragrant flowers, symbolizing beauty and nobility.	Spring
3	Eastern Redbud (<i>Cercis canadensis</i>)	The Eastern Redbud's vibrant pink flowers in spring can complement the cherry blossoms and add to the overall beauty of the garden.	Spring
3	White Fringe Tree (<i>Chionanthus virginicus</i>)	This tree's delicate white flowers in spring and its interesting fruit in late summer make it a visually appealing addition.	Spring
3	Emerald Spice Crabapple (<i>Malus</i> 'Emerald Spice')	Crabapples offer a profusion of spring blossoms and colorful fruit in autumn, adding to the garden's visual appeal.	Spring
1	Spring Snow Crabapple (<i>Malus</i> 'Spring Snow')	Complementary Colors, Succession of Bloom, & Seasonal Interest	Spring
1	Starlight Flowering Crabapple (<i>Malus</i> 'Starlight')	Complementary Colors, Succession of Bloom, & Seasonal Interest	Spring
2	Starburst Amur Maackia (<i>Maackia amurensis</i> 'Starburst')	This tree is known for its fragrant white flowers in summer and its interesting bark.	Summer
7	Princeton Sentry Maidenhair Tree (<i>Ginkgo biloba</i> 'Princeton Sentry')	The Ginkgo is a living fossil, revered for its resilience and longevity. Its fan-shaped leaves turn a brilliant golden yellow in autumn.	Autumn

1	Katsura Tree (Cercidiphyllum japonicum)	Known for its heart-shaped leaves that change color dramatically in autumn, the Katsura tree adds a touch of romance and seasonal beauty. Its leaves also emit a sweet, caramel-like scent in the fall.	Autumn
2	Lacebark Pine (Pinus bungeana)	Pines in general symbolize longevity, resilience, and good fortune in Japanese culture. The lacebark pine, with its distinctive peeling bark, adds an element of age and artistic interest to the landscape.	Winter

Attachments

- [General Park Plans for 2025](#)
- [Park Plans for Trees](#)
- [Park Tree Photos](#)
- [Examples of Signage](#)