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# TEACHING TUESDAY

## HANAIKADA

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The month of April marks the beginning of the end for cherry blossoms in Japan. But as the cherry blossoms begin to fall, people gather to view the *hanaikada* (花筏), or flower rafts, that form. Hanaikada describes the phenomenon of cherry blossoms densely scattered on the surface of the river water that result from the cherry trees that line many of Japan's waterways.

The term "hana ikada" comes from a collection of ballads known as the *Kanginshuu*, written during the Muromachi period. In it, the author describes a festive atmosphere as flower petals form a raft and float down the Yoshino River. Since ancient times, Japanese artists have been fascinated by flowers and leaves floating on the rivers and have often used it for inspiration. Including symbolic use in haiku and waka, there are many ukiyo-e and lacquer prints including the hanaikada motif, such as the makie design at Kodai-ji temple in Kyoto.

There are often special boat tours for people who wish to experience hanaikada up close. Of course, if water isn't your thing, you can always enjoy hanaikada's land-based cousin, *sakura no jyutan* (桜の絨毯), or cherry blossoms carpeting paved streets.