




EMBASSY OF JAPAN, WASHINGTON DC  
**JAPAN**  
INFORMATION & CULTURE CENTER

 JapanEmbDC.JICC

 user/JICCDC

 japanembdc

 JICCDC

# TEACHING TUESDAY

## AOI MATSURI

MAY 15, 2018

CC-BY-2.0 Nullumayulife via Flickr

The Aoi Matsuri is one of Kyoto's three largest and most famous festivals (along with the Gion Matsuri and the Jidai Matsuri). It takes place every year on May 15th.

The festival's primary attraction is the large parade, which winds through Kyoto's streets from the Goshō Imperial Palace to the Kamo Shrines. In this procession, over 500 local residents dressed in Heian-period (794-1185) attire enact the different roles and ranks within the Heian court, including the Imperial Messenger and the Saio—a young woman of the Imperial family who serves as a priestess. The young woman who plays the role of Saio is dressed in formal court attire, complete with a 12-layer kimono weighing up to 30 kg.

Aoi is Japanese for Hollyhock—a leaf believed to ward off natural disasters that is worn by all the members of the procession. The festival originated during the 6th century as an attempt to appease the Kamo deities with gifts and entertainment. The ornate and detailed manner in which this tradition has been preserved makes many observers feel as if they have stepped into the past.