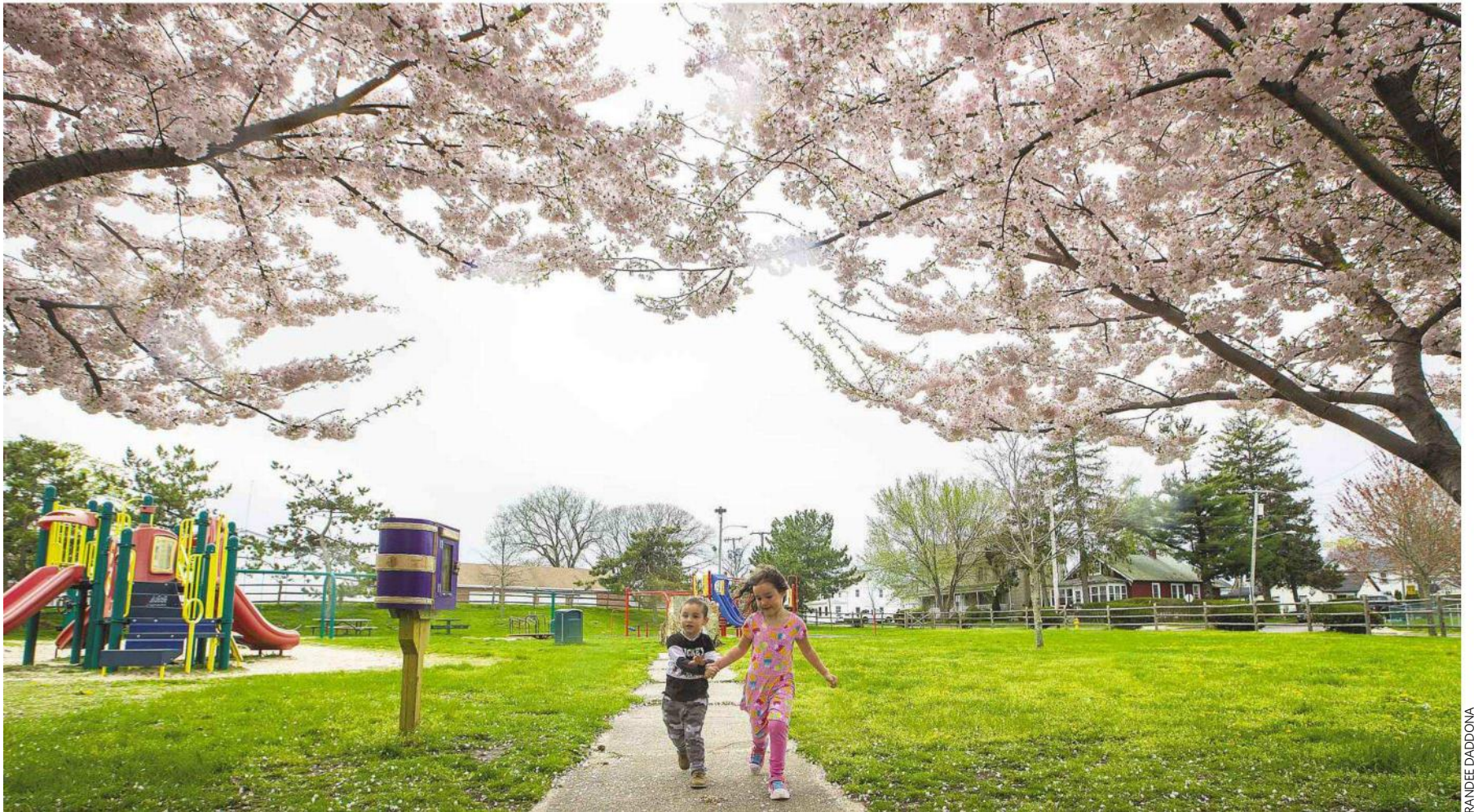




THINK PINK

Where to see and celebrate the annual burst of color from LI cherry trees



RANDEE DADDONA

Mikey O'Brien and his sister Audrey, both of Greenport, run through the Third Street Park and Playground in Greenport as the trees bloom a few years ago.

BY NATALIA DE CUBA ROMERO

Special to Newsday

Like a floral fireworks display, springtime on Long Island explodes in bursts of pink, fuchsia and white as magnolia trees, cherry blossoms and flowering pears blow winter far away.

Two special festivals glory in the arrival of the spring blossoms on the Island; both Greenport Village and Stony Brook University put on annual cherry blossom celebrations focusing on flowers, family and fun.

GREENPORT CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL PETAL TOUR

The monthlong Greenport Cherry Blossom Festival Petal Tour kicks off its fourth edition Saturday at 9 a.m. with the Run for the Petals 5K

(events.elitefeats.com/23petals).

The race will take runners (and walkers) of all ages on a tour through the one-square mile of Greenport Village and past many of the 300-plus cherry and pear trees that will flower over the next few weeks. Register digitally until midnight Friday (\$30 commemorative T-shirt included) or walk on before race time (\$35; T-shirt, \$20).

If you can't make the 5K, you can still enjoy the Petal Tour until June 12. AgroCouncil, a 9-year-old not-for-profit promoting agricultural activities, publishes a self-guided walking tour map of all the flowering trees (and their species) plus the locations of 25-plus participating businesses offering cherry blossom-themed drinks, sweets and novelty items. Make it a botanical garden walk, a petal-strewn pub crawl, a shopping stroll or all of the above.

"It's become a real community event," says AgroCouncil founder Deborah Pittorino. "It gets locals out looking at the trees and gets people into the shops before the season starts."

Proceeds from the Petal Run and the merchant donations for the map benefit the Greenport Village Tree Committee, which provided the original map in 2018 and which plants and maintains all the curbside trees, and the Business Improvement Committee. Pick up the physical map at participating merchants or online (villageofgreenport.org; agrocouncil.org).

CHERRY BLOSSOM STOPS IN GREENPORT VILLAGE

Tour highlights include the Cherry Blossom Crepe, with cherry vanilla ice cream and Nutella, topped with whipped cream and a maraschino cherry (\$13) at Encanto Crepes and Cafe (117 Main St.;

631-477-6533). Pair it with an iced Colombian supremo coffee from their Yam-style cold drip tower (\$5-\$6).

Spoil your fur baby across the street at Harbor Pet (120 Main St.; 631-477-1518) with 10% off anything pink, including harnesses (\$19.99-\$69.99) and their Life is Grruff brand of dog treats baked with grains from Greenport Harbor Brewery (\$9.99-\$34.99). You'll find pink pooch gear on a display and throughout the store.

Claudio's Waterfront (111 Main St.; 631-477-0627) has always participated in the Petal Tour, but special this year is that for the first time Claudio's Tavern & Grill (the legacy original restaurant) will also be open. Both venues will offer Cherry Blossom Vacation, a refreshing blend of Deep Eddy Orange, Malibu, pineapple, cranberry and ginger ale (\$16).



RANDEE DADDONA

There are cherry blossoms all over Greenport — even at the harbor.

Heading north, American Beech (300 Main St.; 631-477-5939) serves up yogurt panna cotta (\$12) with a local cherry blossoms reduction, cherry syrup and citrusy local chervil.

Demarchelier Bistro (471 Main St.; 631-593-1650) has crafted the perfect cocktail: Fleur de Cerise Margarita (\$18) with cherry Blossom elixir, tequila, lime and orange juice. Sakura — ground cherry blossom petals — rims the glass.

WORKSHOPS, FASHION SHOW AND EXHIBITS AT CHARLES B. WANG CENTER

Celebrating the arrival of the cherry blossoms is not unique to the United States. In Japan, hanami — viewing parties — are common; for the Japanese, the flower symbolizes spring, while its short life is a reminder of the fleeting nature of our own.

Equally fleeting is the Sakura Matsuri, a one-day cherry blossom festival celebrated by the Japan Center and Charles B. Wang Center at Stony Brook University. On May 7 from noon to 5 p.m., the Wang Center, with its 40 spectacular Kwanzan cherry trees, will host an array of Japanese cultural and culinary activities, from Taiko drumming to origami to tea ceremony workshops.

Over the 23-year history of the rain-or-shine festival, first started and still coproduced by martial arts studio Ryu Shu Kan Japanese Arts Center in Farmingville, it has evolved. Attendees spontaneously added cosplay to the fun. Dozens come dressed as their favorite manga characters. Now the festival includes a cosplay fashion show and competition.

New this year is an accompanying exhibition, “The Splendor of Bamboo: Japanese Contemporary Basket,” running through May 31. “There are really exquisite baskets in this installation,” says Wang Center director Jinyoung Jin.

Many activities are free to the public, but for many of the workshops attendees will need a wristband; \$30; \$20 for students and seniors; \$10 for children 6 to 12; free for children 5 and younger.

ON THE COVER Ben and Jennifer Susser walk among the cherry blossoms on Main Street in Greenport last May.

WEEKEND EVENTS

ASTRONOMY DAY The day includes science demonstrations, solar observing and planetarium shows, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 8 to 10 p.m. at the Vanderbilt Mansion, Museum and Planetarium on Saturday. Admission for the daytime show is \$16, \$13 ages 12 and younger; evening show is \$10, \$8 ages 12 and younger; 180 Little Neck Rd., Centerport, vanderbiltmuseum.org, 631-854-5579.

BROADWAY ON MAIN Enjoy a showcase of Broadway performers singing selections from “Les Misérables,” “Cats,” “Hamilton” and more, 8 p.m. Saturday at Jeanne Rimsky Theater at Landmark on Main Street. Tickets start at \$45; 232 Main St., Port Washington, landmarkonmainstreet.org, 516-767-6444.

ARTS AND AUTOMOBILES LI POP UP The event includes exotic cars on display, an automobile art gallery, music, fashion and more, 5 to 10 p.m. Saturday at the Samanea Mall. Free; fee for food and drink vendors; 1500 Old Country Rd., Westbury, lipopup.com/liug, 718-869-9501.

LONG ISLAND GUITAR FESTIVAL The festival features eclectic and international performers, emerging artists concert, master classes and Q&As at Setauket Presbyterian Church. Festival runs 9:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday; 12:30 to 6 p.m. Sunday. Tickets start at \$10; 5 Caroline Ave., Setauket; ligfest.net, 631-941-4271.

ANTIQUES AND GARDEN WEEKEND Browse through antiques, collectibles, retro items, folk art, estate and antique jewelry, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday at the Village Center. Admission is \$6; 101A E. Broadway, Port Jefferson, portjeff-antiques-garden.net. — LYNN PETRY



VANDERBILT MANSION

Astronomy Day at the Vanderbilt Mansion.

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