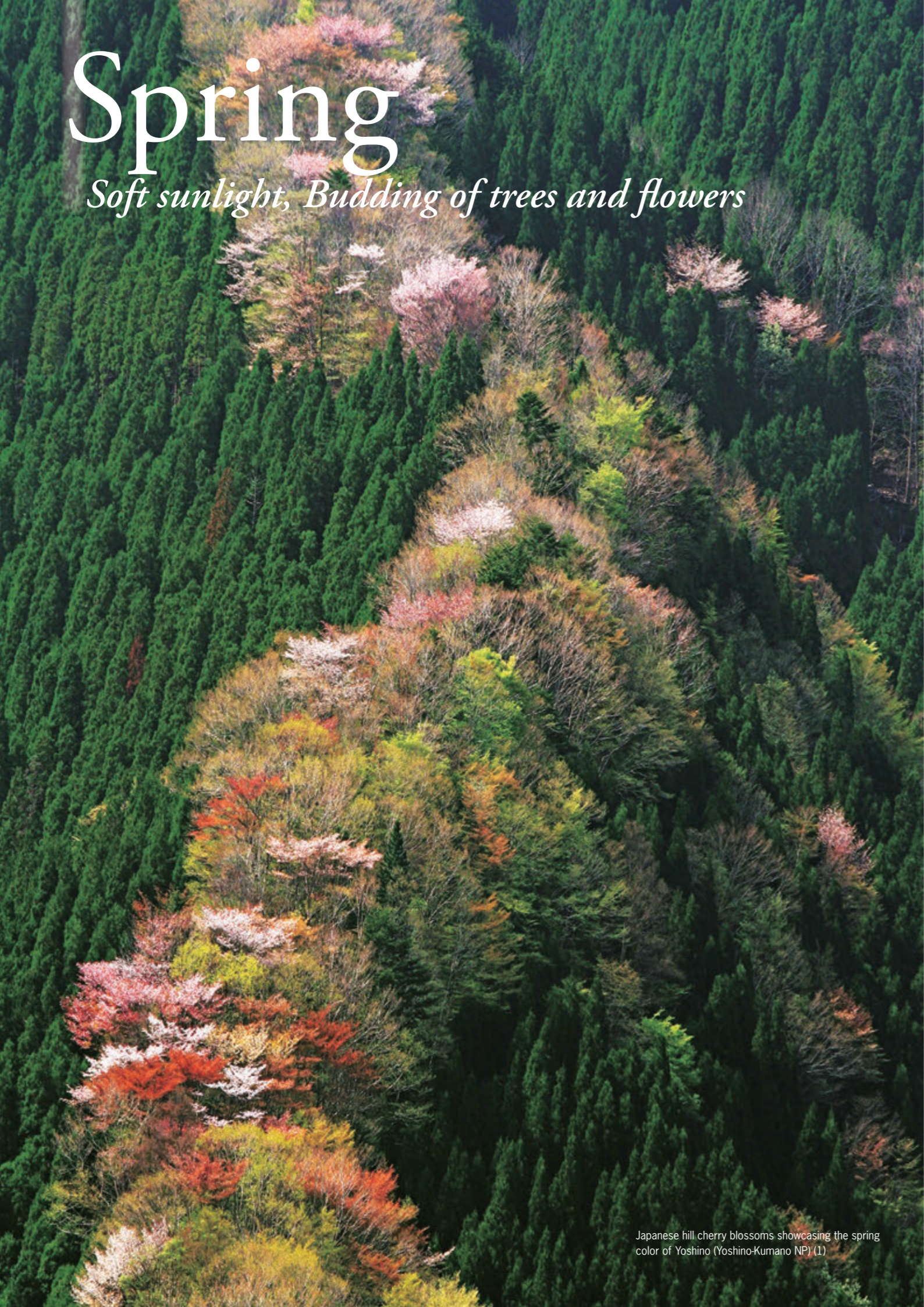


# Spring

*Soft sunlight, Budding of trees and flowers*



Japanese hill cherry blossoms showcasing the spring color of Yoshino (Yoshino-Kumano NP) (1)



Asian skunk cabbage in Oze Marsh (Oze NP) (2)  
Wild azaleas and the Kuju Mountain Range (Aso-Kuju NP) (3)



A cape in a sea mist, Okino-shima Island (Daisen-Oki NP) (4)

## COLUMN

### Cherry blossom front

In late March, when cherry trees begin blooming in southern Kyushu and Shikoku, Japanese people start caring about 'Cherry blossom front', which forecasts expected dates for cherry blossoms. For the following a month and half, cherry blossom front moves slowly up to the north in the Japanese archipelago. People are anxious to view the gorgeous full blooming and are fascinated with the transient nature of flowers dying in a few days and a beauty in the way of falling petals.



# Summer

*The glow of seas and mountains,  
The song of life  
in praise of the earth*



The bountiful clear ocean in Kerama Blue. (Keramashoto NP) (1)



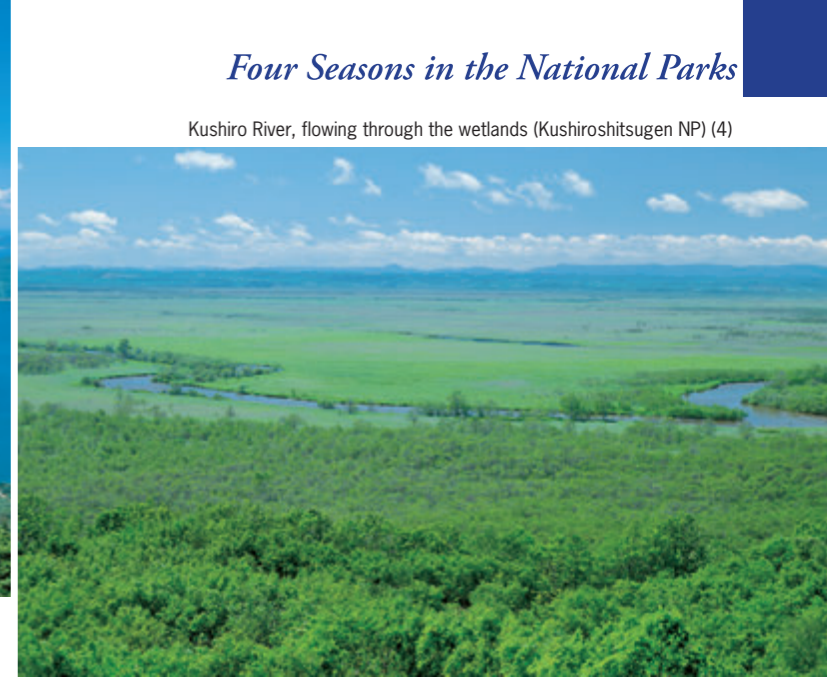
A flower carpet spreading over near the summit of Mt. Hakuba-dake, the Japan Northern Alps (Chubusangaku NP) (2)



The summer of the archipelagic sea (Setonaikai NP) (3)



Islands of Yaeyama in the coral sea (Iriomote-Ishigaki NP) (5)



Kushiro River, flowing through the wetlands (Kushiroshitsugen NP) (4)



A flower garden on a major ridge of Asahi Mountain Range (Bandai-Asahi NP) (6)

## COLUMN

### A mountain high paradise —The garden of wildflowers

Summer is the season for mountain hiking. The mountains in north of central Japan offer an amusement for hikers to spot fields of wildflowers. As climbing a mountain trail patiently, where trees become sparse, hikers will find the garden of colorful alpine flowers spreading like a carpet. Alpine plants are adapted to harsh alpine environments such as low temperatures, strong wind and prolonged periods of snow pack. Most species bloom all at once in the short summer. The lovely and healthy life forms determined to survive in such severity is a remarkable view, etched into hiker's memories.



Komakusa (*Dicenta* sp.)

(Photo 1 by Seiji Miyazato; 2: Tsuyoshi Takahashi; 3, 4 & 5: Toshitaka Morita; 6: Shinichi Satake)

# Fall

*Clear mountain streams,  
Colorful meadows and forests*

Mt. Asahidake, seen from mire pools in autumn color (Taisetsusan NP) (1)



Autumn sunset at Setonaikai Inland Sea (Setonaikai NP) (2)



Togakushi mountain range seen from Kagami Pond (Myoko-Togakushi renzan NP)



Kusa-momiji (Grass autumn color) and Japanese larch trees (Nikko NP) (3)

Autumn leaves and Ryuzuno-taki Fall (Nikko NP) (4)



## COLUMN

### Seeking for the autumn color

Japan is said to have the most splendid autumn leaves because of its abundant and diverse deciduous broad-leaved forests. In fall, a variety of deciduous species, such as maple, Katsura tree and mountain ash, turn red or yellow with delicately varied shades of color, which covers the mountain surface. The vividness of autumn color is different every year even at a same location because it depends on temperature variability and moisture conditions. Japanese people go out in the fields and mountains seeking for the view of autumn leaves, which has been a popular activity since 1000 years ago. Towada Lake, Oirase Stream and Oku-nikko, and other famous spots are crowded by viewers most during autumn leaf seasons.

