

FEATURES

The Umbrellas of Japan



Above left: Kanazawa *wagasa* are known for eye-catching, vibrant colors and elaborate, elegant patterns.

Above right: Kyoto's *hanamachi* districts offer a condensed experience of traditional culture, including performing arts, as well as the unique Japanese culture of *omotenashi* (hospitality), and *wagasa* are a part of this experience.

Below left: The process of attaching *washi* to the umbrella frame using an adhesive made from natural ingredients (tapioca starch)

Below right: Display of a tower-shaped three-dimensional work

During the transition from spring to summer, Japan goes through a rainy season, the so-called *tsuyu* (also pronounced *baiu*), literally meaning “plum rain.” Umbrellas are one of the indispensable items during this season. *Wagasa* are a type of unique Japanese umbrellas made using traditional paper *washi*, and original techniques for making *wagasa* have been handed down through the ages in various regions throughout Japan, such as Kyoto, Gifu, and Kanazawa. In this month’s issue of *Highlighting Japan*, we explore *wagasa* traditions, the use of umbrellas in *Nihon buyo* dance plays and events, as well as unique Japanese beliefs, awareness, and culture associated with umbrellas.

