

226-year-old Japanese Temple Bell to Be Installed at the U.S. National Arboretum on New Year's Day

The bell, a gift from the National Bell Festival, will be dedicated in the courtyard of the three pavilions that comprise the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum.

WASHINGTON, DC, USA, December 28, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Hear the resonant tolls of a sacred Japanese hanshō (temple bell) cast in 1798 ring out for the first time at the U.S. National Arboretum this New Year's Day. The bell, a gift from the [National Bell Festival](#), will be dedicated and installed in the central courtyard of the three pavilions and special exhibits gallery that comprise the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum. Speakers during the event will include:



Bonsai on display within the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C.

- Richard T. Olsen | Director, U.S. National Arboretum



We are thrilled to place this sacred hanshō where Japanese art, history, and culture are celebrated, and where the bell will be both respected and contextualized through conservation in use."

Paul Ashe, Director, National Bell Festival

- Paul Ashe | Director, National Bell Festival
- Rev. Inryū Poncé-Barger | Sensei, All Beings Zen Sangha

Following a Zen Buddhist blessing and 'Dedication of Merit,' the bell will be sounded softly three times. Four traditional Japanese teas will be served to guests. The event will proceed rain or shine with access to the museum's special exhibits gallery.

New Year's Day

Jan. 1, 2024 | 1:30-2:00pm (Eastern)

Gates to the museum courtyard open at 1:00pm

U.S. National Arboretum
National Bonsai & Penjing Museum Courtyard
3501 New York Ave. NE
Washington, D.C. 20002

Advance [registration](#) is requested.

About...

1798 Bell

The hanshō, or Buddhist temple bell, was cast in the ninth month of Kansei 10 (1798) by Katō Jinemon from Yokokawa, who came from a family of bell makers in the area of present-day Hachiōji, west of the Tokyo metropolitan area. Their foundry was near the Zen monastery and temple Daisen (also called Daisenji in respect), for which the bell was cast. A monk named Myōdō led a fundraising campaign for the bell's casting. It stands 27 inches tall and weighs 80 lbs.

The Daisen monastery no longer exists. It was located in the Amema village in the Tama district of the province of Musashi. As is true of many Edo-period villages, the names of locations have changed, but the location corresponds to Amema, Akiruno City, Tokyo 197-0825. In 1868, the monastery was incorporated with another temple complex named Jōfukuji, which also no longer exists.

The bell is inscribed in classical Japanese across three ikenomachi, or panels, which detail the particulars of its casting. It includes the phrase:

One strike permeates all things. How could it be said the strike is slight, when it is heard without fail?

Hanshō are stationary clapper-less signaling bells hung in Buddhist temples throughout Japan. Like the larger bonshō, hanshō are hung mouth-down and remain motionless. A wooden beam or handheld mallet is swung to sound the bell, which indicates the time and calls monks to prayer. In earlier days, hanshō also gave service as fire alarms in village watch towers.

It is said the sloping shoulders and flat base of a hanshō emulate the seated posture of Buddha. As such, the bells are accorded utmost reverence. Casting the temple bell is also a sacred event, with sprigs of hallowed mulberry, gold offerings, and papers containing Buddhist prayers tossed into the molten bronze.

During World War II, an ordinance to collect metals was decreed throughout Japan. To feed its war machine and keep its armies outfitted, Japan needed vast quantities of industrial materials – and like plucking fruit from a tree, they turned to peaceable, defenseless bell towers. An estimated 70,000 bells (approximately 90% of the temple bells then in existence) were destroyed

and smelted into armament.

Today, bonshō and hanshō maintain their sacred place in Japanese society and have become internationally-recognized symbols of peace and diplomacy.

National Bell Festival

The National Bell Festival is on a mission to celebrate and restore bells in America. Each year on New Year's Day, the festival rings in the New Year with free community events across the U.S. and across the world. This year, in what may be a global first, bells will resound across all seven continents – including Antarctica! The organization also works throughout the year to restore historic bells and bell towers to their former thundering glory.

The National Bell Festival's work supports the United Nations' Global Goal No. 11 for Sustainable Development: Protecting the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage, and is enabled, in part, by a Google for Nonprofits grant. Learn more about the National Bell Festival and the lineup of events and experiences on New Year's Day by visiting: [Bells.org](https://bells.org)

U.S. National Arboretum

Established in 1927 by an Act of Congress, the U.S. National Arboretum stretches across 451 acres in northeastern Washington, D.C. With a mission to increase the aesthetic, environmental, and economic importance of landscape and ornamental plants, the Arboretum curates picturesque gardens and exhibits, funds long-term botanical research, and leads conservation programs. It is also home to an extensive herbarium, the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum, the National Grove of State Trees, and 22 Corinthian columns which were once part of the east portico of the U.S. Capitol.

All Beings Zen Sangha

All Beings Zen Sangha is a Washington Metropolitan based Zen Meditation community founded in 2004. It practices in the Japanese line of Soto Zen Buddhists as prescribed by Shunryu Suzuki Roshi who established the San Francisco Zen Center in the early 1960s. Under the guidance of its Spiritual director and resident priest, Sensei Inryū Ponce-Barger, the urban center located near Woodley Park offers regular Zen meditation sittings (zazen), Dharma talks, services, sesshin retreats, and hosts practice discussion groups. The Sangha also enjoys the use of nearby rural locations for retreats. All the Sangha's activities emphasize accordance with traditional Buddhist Precepts toward living in harmony with all beings and respectful acceptance of others.

Paul Ashe

National Bell Festival

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