



## Weeds

Do you remember, just over three years ago, when I told you about my neighbour Tamura-san, who cut down a large cherry tree on his property just across the stream from my workshop? That was really quite a sad event for me - the tree had been very beautiful, and was the only cherry in view from my windows. Actually, the story was quite a bit 'worse' than what I described; he hadn't stopped with just the cherry tree. He kept his chain saw very busy that season, and brought down quite a few trees on his property. I had been greatly saddened by the loss of beautiful greenery.

What do you think about that phrase 'three years'? Does it seem like a long time? That of course depends on what you are talking about. In the life of a young child, three years is an incredibly long time, and many changes will take place during that time span. For someone like myself, settled into the middle of his life, and working on long-term projects, it may seem that nothing much changes over the course of three years.

If we think about such things as trees, our first reaction may be that three years is 'nothing' in the life of a tree. After all, trees don't seem to change at all; they are simply 'there', part of the scenery around us. At least, that is how I used to think of trees, before I moved to this house, and had the experience of watching Tamura-san battle the trees on his property.

And 'battle' isn't an exaggeration! Every year he uses his chain saw to bring down a couple of the largest trees, as well as a number of medium-sized ones, but nothing seems to change. His property is still covered with trees! They just keep coming back, and they just keep growing.

One area just in front of my window off to the right is a perfect example. No more than a couple of months after I moved in nine years ago, he brought down a very tall tree in that area. My building is four stories high, and this tree was higher still. When I asked him why he was cutting down such a magnificent tree, he said it was for safety; it might blow down and damage my building. I was saddened to see the bare space and raw stump, but couldn't complain.

Just a few years later though, not only was there no trace of the stump left, but a pair of new trees had grown in the same space, and towered up to my third floor, leaning out over the river towards me. In autumn their leaves made a beautiful show outside my windows. But I knew what to expect, so avoided becoming too attached to the scene, and some time later, I was proved right, as they disappeared one day when I was away from home. I came down to the workshop the next morning to see fresh stumps, and a pile of sawn logs.

The trees didn't give up though, and fresh shoots soon sprouted from the stumps. Tamura-san slashed them off. But he then ignored this corner of his property for a couple of years, and while he had his back turned, up they came again. Just this past week, he returned to the battle, cut away all the new growth, then wrapped the stumps in black plastic.

I no longer get upset about the cutting and chain-sawing. I have learned that overall, the plants and trees over there are growing faster than he can keep them cut back. I am currently enjoying a new grove of a half-dozen trees in an area that was bare just a short time ago, and this year I enjoyed the sight of another beautiful cherry - a tree that I hadn't noticed before because it was too short and hidden by some other trees. It has grown tremendously, and put on a wonderful display this year.

To those of you who are gardeners, or who have property with many trees, I suppose none of this is 'news', and you probably share Tamura-san's frustrations, but to me, who only ever lived in the city before, it has been quite an education. Trees aren't immutable non-changing things after all - and for Tamura-san, they're weeds!

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