



# Dr. John R. Gathright (Ph.D.)

**PROFESSOR** Chubu University (Aichi, Japan)

**FOUNDER** “Tree Climbing Japan”

**MEDIA COMMENTATOR & PUBLIC SPEAKER**

- **John Gathright was raised in Victoria BC Canada by a family of Scottish decent and tradition, and first came to Japan in 1985 for a brief stay that turned into a life and love for Japan and her people.**
- **A graduate of Nanzan University, he later earned his doctorate from Nagoya University, and was the first to publish scientific papers on the benefits of purpose-specific tree climbing programs.**
- **Gathright is an author of nine books, and works as a media commentator while teaching at Chubu University; he currently resides in the mountains of Seto, Japan with wife and two sons.**
- **Gathright is affectionately known as “John-san”(Mr. John) in Japan.**

As an author and media personality, John-san quickly established himself as one of the few non-Japanese columnists writing in Japan, with a weekly column spanning over 10 years in Japanese newspapers. His humorous yet heart-warming stories made him popular as a media personality, and has appeared in numerous TV programs covering a wide range of topics related to nature and families. John-san has a passion for helping youth and his essays have been published in textbooks used nationally for Japanese elementary, middle and high schools.

In addition to the themes of families and ecology, John-san also writes about the importance of living true to one’s principals. John-san and his family live in a tree house made of recycled miso (fermented beans) barrels in the mountains of Seto and has been featured in books, magazines and TV.

An avid ecologist/naturalist and tree climber, John-san’s love for nature and helping others inspired him to establish the first school for tree climbing in Japan, “Tree Climbing Japan”, which is devoted to bringing people of all ages and physical abilities into the forests to climb trees and enjoy nature. “Tree Climbing Japan” is active in improving forests and empowering people worldwide, and has helped over 150,000 people climb trees and trained over 1,200 instructors. As a keynote speaker for the Japanese Ministry of Parks and Education, John-san strongly encourages sustainable forestry and eco-lumber, and discourages the import of old growth logs and lumber to Japan.

Through this work with “Tree Climbing Japan”, John-san later established a “Treehab” program to allow people of all abilities to climb the world’s largest trees. In the summer of 2001, Hikosaka Toshiko became the first severely physically challenged person to climb atop an 80-meter giant Sequoia tree. (Smithsonian, March 2002) “Treehab” continues to help physically challenged persons climb trees and also aims to create international exchanges through tree climbing.

John-san has received a number of awards and recognition for his contribution to communities and his environmentally conscious educational and programs:

- *Recipient of the “Tsubaki Award” for contributions to society*
- *Awarded an Ecology Design Prize GOOD DESIGN AWARD from Japan Industrial Design Promotion Organization (JIDPO) for his growing village project.*
- *Produced an official pavilion at the World Expo 2005 in Aichi (“the Growing Village”) which has remained on the site as a park*
- *Recognized by the Japan Industrial Design Promotion Organization (JIDPO) for his safe and ecologically friendly tree climbing programs for children.*
- *A member for the Japanese Prime Minister’s “Beautiful Forests” initiative.*

John-san’s hobbies include camping and outings with his family, sports, scuba-diving, bagpipes and spending quiet nights aloft with flying squirrels and Japanese Monkeys.



“It is my dream that all children  
grow up like magnificent trees –  
tall and strong, kind and unique,  
helping others to grow” *-John Gathright*

