

A BATTLE OF EQUALS

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For images please visit the website.



Last year Pietertje Vriend Wagenaar was honored with the Gold Medal 2018 and thus became the 2019 peony of the year (this year the award went to Angel Emily). For me it was a bit unexpected as I would have chosen The Fawn, which has been around far longer and is thus probably more easily available. I only grow The Fawn, so I could not say much about the other one, only that it would have to be extremely good to be able to surpass The Fawn quality-wise. I had heard rumors that the two were one and the same in fact.

Now this year two separate events that happened concurrently have convinced me they aren't. First there's this post from a large peony wholesaler:



[Dit bericht bekijken op Instagram](#)

Paeonia The Fawn is hot! The intense pink colour and the many dots on its petals are breathtaking! #пионы #пион #цветок #blumen #blomster #floristik #fleurs #fiori #цветочныймагазин #флорист #kwiaciarsz #piwonie #kwiaty #fiori #peonia #pfingstrosen #peonía #lasflores #flores #flores do casamento #flores de boda #свадебные цветы #Hochzeitsblumen #pæoner #pioner #blomsterhandlare #bryllup_blomster #kukkia #fiori_da_sposa #牡丹

Een bericht gedeeld door [My Peony Society \(@mypeonysociety\)](#) op 5 Jun 2019 om 10:03 (PDT)

What caught my eyes is that these 'The Fawn' are unlike mine. The sepals are much more red than mine and the foliage does look different too. Now I would have blamed it on the image itself (it's not always easy to get the colors right), but then the second event made me change my mind. In a row of Elsa Sass peonies, it turned out I got one rogue pink plant that looked a lot like The Fawn, but surely wasn't. In fact it looked exactly like the peonies in that instagram post. As it's very unlikely there are many more such 'sprayed twins' around, this is without much doubt Pietertje Vriend Wagenaar. It's a second year plant so I took some stems from second year The Fawn plants to compare and shot some images.

Now you'll see that the differences are subtle and not always visible. Both are sturdy, although The Fawn is the sturdiest one here. The open flowers for example are quite alike, I didn't see any conspicuous differences. But the buds do show some differences. On the left you see that Pietertje Vriend Wagenaar has a somewhat paler background on its petals and has more red in the sepals whereas on the right The Fawn has some greenish or beige cast to them.

The main difference are the leaflets however. Both have dark green foliage, but Pietertje Vriend Wagenaar's is by far the darkest. And whilst The Fawn has slightly upturned foliage, the leaflets of Pietertje Vriend Wagenaar are much flatter and also somewhat less wide and more pointed at the top.

As for the open flowers, the differences are hard to be noticed anyway:

This by the way is how my 'The Fawn' peonies look like when ready to be sold to florists:

We'll see next year how they compare when we have a third year Pietertje Vriend Wagenaar. I also have The Fawn of that age and they are much taller, sturdier and larger compared to second year plants, I do wonder whether Pietertje Vriend Wagenaar will improve that much as well.

Now I have done some experiments with The Fawn this season (earlier flowering and long term storage (I have them flowering indoors at this time of writing)) but I'll keep that for another post.

If you happen to grow them both, I'd be glad to hear your opinion on this.