

## CHINESE TREE PEONIES - A DOCUMENTARY

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Some documentaries about tree peonies have recently appeared on youtube by CGTN Documentary. English spoken and made in China, a welcome addition for those wanting to know more about them.

Launched on Jan. 1, 2011, CGTN Documentary is the only Chinese TV channel to broadcast documentaries in English 24/7. The channel broadcasts over 1,000 episodes of new programs each year, including top quality documentaries such as "A Bite of China", "Wild Wonders", and the 100-episode "A History of China".

CGTN Documentary is an ideal platform for people around the world to learn about China's past and present, and is dedicated to promoting the best of Chinese documentaries.

Source: [Youtube](#)

Although the peony is China's undoubted "King of Flowers", little is known about how it came to acquire its popularity and status. Archaeologist Cai Yunzhang believes the cultural significance of the flower can be traced back to the ancient Chinese capital of Luoyang. Could historical records and artefacts cast light on how and why it attained its iconic status?

Indeed, Luoyang peonies still enjoy special status - one reason why Taiwan residents like Xu Baorong eagerly anticipate the arrival of 8,000 Luoyang peonies. Will they impress him like they did when he last saw them 60 years earlier? Whether they live up to his expectations or not, the peony is a symbol whose flamboyant beauty lights up lives and symbolizes the hope of an entire nation.

Strange as it may seem, the peony was once more highly prized for its medicinal value than its beauty, and though the flower still retains its medicinal role in some places - in Tongling, for example, peony root bark is still used to relieve rheumatic pain - the fact is that the flower long ago left the pharmacy to pursue a more cosmetic and aesthetic vocation. This can be seen in places like the Yubaba Shrine in Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province, famous for its peony-patterned brickwork. What can the cutting-edge botanical researches carried out at the world's largest peony gene database, reveal about the role of man and nature in shaping the peony and its place in Chinese culture?

This episode reveals the secret life of the peony. Wei Zhuxin is a renowned nurseryman from Tuqiao, Luoyang. By grafting new stems from different types of peony onto a single root stock, he is creating what is known in Chinese as "the assorted peony". But does he have the skill to make sure that all the different grafts can be made to bloom at the same time in a glorious riot of color?

Meanwhile, Zhang Shuling, one of Luoyang's most experienced horticulturalists, finally gets her hands on a coveted Wei's Purple Peony. But will an ideal specimen - a 1000-petal Purple Peony - continue to elude her? Whatever the answer, these stories show that, thanks to human intervention, the peony has come a long way from the single ring of white petals of its ancient ancestor!

In this episode, we look at the wider influence of China's iconic flower. In Taipei's oldest fabric market, for example, Huang Jiaxiang, a fashion designer, is looking to repeat his 2009 success when a traditional Taiwan peony print cotton earned him a top design award. Will the peony win him plaudits for a second time?

But the peony has also made inroads further afield. In the late 18th century, peonies were introduced to Europe, where, as Monsieur Riviere's peonies in France demonstrate, they remain popular to this day. But time doesn't stand still. In Yuzhong County, Gansu Province, Chen Dezhong, a horticultural engineer, dreams of cultivating a stable variety of pure yellow peony. Wherever you go, it seems, the peony means so much, in so many ways, to so many different people, from all walks of life.