

PAEONIA

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Letter from Herman Krupke, Sweden	page 1
A Visionary's Dream, Chris Laning	page 2
Lobata, Chris Laning	pages 2- 3
A Good Idea Proves to be a Bad Idea, Chris Laning	page 3
Peonies of Greece: Myth, Science, and Art, Chris Laning	page 3
Seed Distribution Program	pages 5-7
Peonies 1984, Don Hollingsworth	pages 7-8
Letter from K. Sahin , Holland	pages 9-10

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Ljung June 24 1984

Hallo Chris,

Those *P. officinalis* Monte Baldo are different from the *officinalis* flora plenas. Plants are 50 - 65 cm in height, dense, compact growing. Leaves fresh, bluish dark green. Flowers single, about 8 cm, medium pink. Only one flower on a sturdy stalk tight above the leaves. Nearly always 2 seed pods, very seldom even three.

P. anomala are 50 - 55 cm high held 12 - 20 cm above leaves - together 65 - 75 cm. Light pink flowers appear the first days in June. Flowers are somewhat smaller than *Woodwardii*, even lighter. 4 - 6 cm. Some plants have white flowers, nearly all make 1-2 side buds. Seed pods are almost hairless, nudicarpa.

Have had a lot of flowers from seeds you sent in 1979. Especially one from '**Archangel**' promises to be huge and double. I do suspect that many flowers didn't develop well due to hard night frost at the beginning of May. We had hardly any lactifloras this year.

Best regards,
Hermann Krupke

Guldsmedsgardern, 520 30 Ljung, Sweden

A VISIONARY'S DREAM

The new Greek peony species book will be a great addition to our fund of peony information, but an even greater contribution possibly could be made! I am thinking that a Greek Peony Society be formed, Kees, Elizabeth, and Niki would, or could be, the core of the organization. By using their unusual talents in this endeavor for this cause, we would have a sister peony society and one that would enhance American and Greek friendship; both countries would benefit. When we consider the great contribution that the Caucasus area provided through its species, it is a fascinating vision that the Greek species might offer. *P. mlokosewitschii*, *P. macrophylla*, *P. lobata*, and other species have offered great new sources for new colors and forms of peonies. But even of equal importance, the tetraploids, especially the new amphidiploids that have been formed, are offering a revolution in peony hybridizing.

And as long as we are dreaming, we may add other groups to our wish list. Think of a Chinese Peony Society with its untapped species reservoir; and a Japanese Society, a Russian, a Korean, and even a peony society of India. Is this too big a dream? Well this would be only the first step in peony culture. It is the people of these various countries that are to be so precious friends. But would they all have to learn the English language so that I could understand them? Yup! ("Yup" means anything you want it to mean.)

- Chris

LOBATA

The goal for lobata hybrids is: good garden plants that stand up to wind and rain, are healthy and easy to propagate. Some clones will have single flowers, some semi-double, and some full double. The roots will be modified and will be more nearly like lactiflora roots. The red of the lobata is entirely satisfactory and in my opinion needs no improvement. Oh, let me not forget fertility! As of now, the fertility problem has been the reason so little progress can be made with this strain — but let me tell you about the advances now coming along.

'**AMERICA**': Listed in Klehm's catalog at \$30.00 — this is a lobata hybrid — a rare seedling of '**Burma Ruby**'. The plant is excellent and the color is a good lobata red. I would rate this introduction par excellent! As with other lobatas, it takes an extra year to become established but in this third year (for my plant) the clone produced 5 good seeds by using Laning's Best Yellow pollen. This is encouraging.

'**BURMA MIDNIGHT**': Listed in Klehm's catalog at \$25.00. Two years ago after having grown in the garden for only one year, set seed enabling me to have three seedlings which are now growing in a pot. Last year, no seed. This year 4 good seeds were gotten. '**Burma Midnight**' is of the same quality as '**America**'. I don't see how a hybridizer could improve on the looks of these two plants — but what shall we do, quit??

'BURMA RUBY': Listed by the Klehm Nursery at \$15.00. My plant is an oldie which was divided into six divisions two years ago and the six have not yet fully recovered. While I like the flowers with their tan stamens, I wouldn't advise getting this thing for hybridizing. Never did get a seed from it.

'DAD': This introduction can be gotten from Klehm's for \$20,00 — and I might say, get it!! Maybe this one will have been the beginning of great things that are in the offing! But let me tell you about **'Dad'** in my garden: Some years ago it came to me (not of its own volition) as a poor little thing. Quickly it developed into a lovely plant with lovely lobata red flowers. In its prime it produced 13 seeds one year. The next year most of the plant died. On digging it up that fall, I found that the dead part was dead and the live part was alive (astute?). But I now have three parts of it growing lustily, producing 7 seeds, all of which seem to be good. Whatever happened to the 13 seeds gotten before the dead part died? — Well:

'DAD' F₂ (Daddy's Kids)-- Through mishandling and misadventure, only six are left! I love every one of them! Two of these siblings bloomed this year for the first time — dark lobata red blooms — one on each plant and none on the other four. These two blooms were pollinated with L.B.Y. pollen and 17 seeds were gotten. Now I believe that the sterility problem may be a thing of the past!! But maybe I should wait seeing what plants develop from these seeds (excuse my jubilation). If good seed producing lobata hybrids really are forthcoming, the next step is developing a better root structure thereby facilitating the dividing of roots and easing propagation problems. This is getting to be exciting!

- Chris

A GOOD IDEA TURNS OUT TO BE A BAD IDEA!

The more the soil is cultivated, the better the aeration conducive to plant growth. This year reliance on a heavy layer of mulch was in lieu of cultivation with the intent that worms and other living things would keep the soil loose and friable. The practice proved to be a failure — the soil compacted to a consistency of concrete due to walking down the rows. Peony plants complained!

June, July and August were very dry months, aggravating a bad condition. Cultivating, while always beneficial, is most important where drought reigns supreme. The more you cultivate, the better the plants adjust to shortages of moisture. Fifty years ago, while working for a truck (vegetable) gardener, I learned the value of cultivating; he said cultivating brings up the moisture.

An example of the above idea is evident by our Michigan corn crop: the "no till" farmers lost their crop while the others apparently did rather well.

Poor soil and sick peony plants discourage gardening and hybridizing. Here is a trick that is exceedingly effective: dig the soil from one side of any plant that is not doing well — expose some of the roots on that side — fill the hole with compost and mound soil over this decayed vegetation as needed. Add fertilizer to this area in spring. A year or two later repeat procedure on the other side of the plant. Boy-Oh-Boy & Hey! look at the thing grow!!!

PEONIES OF GREECE: MYTH, SCIENCE, AND ART

Species Peonies of Greece and Nearby Islands

(House and Garden, May 1984)

White peonies, or creamy, and even with a bit of yellow in their makeup are found on Aegean Islands of Icaria, Euboea, Andros, Rhodes, Crete, and Karpathos. Newly discovered — Icarian peony called *P. icarica*, a great six-inch white peony with purple filaments.

P. parnassica found on Mount Parnassus. Bud appears to be black and when opening, the flower is mahogany black with ruby-purple reflections. (I surely would like to be able to work with this species!)

Niki Goulandris painted the various peony species so carefully as to provide an accurate reproduction of each species that is included in the new book "Peonies of Greece: Myth, Science, and Art".

The accompanying botanical texts are provided by William T. Stearn of the British Museum and Peter H. Davis of the University of Edinburgh.

The American Horticulturist news edition of July, 1984, has an article and pictures (I should say "paintings") of the Goulandris book. This is information about the exhibition which took place this summer at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.

The Weekly Newsmagazine of Science, July 28 issue, has an article on this same subject, written by Julie Ann Miller, entitled "Greek Portraits of a Queen" with picture of the painting of Niki Goulandris.

And, of course, we have the American Peony Society's reprint of Art Weekly Review that also includes pictures of the Goulandris paintings.

My good friend, Kees (K. Sahin) of the Netherlands writes: "I have no word of Mrs. Goulandris recently, but expect her books to come my way when ready. Yours will be sent airmail the day it arrives." He believes it will even outclass Sir Fredric Stern's great book!

I will tell you about my friend Kees. He met us on our arrival in Holland and gave us a two-day guided tour of the farms and greenhouses and a close-up of Alsmeer Flower Auction Center. He is very interested in peonies; says they don't set seed in Holland. Although Kees comes to America every four to six weeks, he has never seen my peony patch. I think if he could see the abundance of seeds the tetraploids and lactifloras produce, he would marvel.

Kees is a seedsman who travels the world over and does good business with our seed companies. Also, he has Dutch farmers produce much seed on extensive acreages and has expanded until now having 150 acres out-of-doors and 5½ acres under glass, along with 25 acres outdoors and 2 acres under glass for research. No wonder he has no time for visiting.

Last year a few pounds of tetraploid seeds were sent to him and now he reports about 40% germination. I consider this to be satisfactory since the seeds were sent rather late in the fall. At least another 40% should germinate next spring.

And now about his wife — No, I have never met her. Her name is Elisabeth Georgiadou. She is a good friend of Niki Goulandris and so was able to send me (in 1980) two prints of the water color painting that will be included in the new book.

I wish I could rewrite the script of the last few years since I have been so remiss in giving due honor and respect to this vary talented lady. But how does one recall a spoken word or a written page? And what about unfulfilled promises!

Elisabeth is Dr. Georgiadou, received her B.Sc. in Horticultural Botany, is a member of the Fellow Linnaean Society, a very prestigious body; V.M.H. which is the Victoria Medal of Honour — which is the highest possible honor in the United Kingdom (England) in horticulture or botany.

She is of Greek-Cypriot descent, so you see it is quite easy to see her interest in "Peonies of Greece: Myth, Science and Art".

PAEONIANS: Read the June, 1980 and March, 1980 issues of our newsletter to call to remembrance the correspondence between this lady and me. We have neglected her.

Editor's note (House & Garden, May, 1984) — "Paeonies of Greece", a limited edition portfolio of twelve large color lithographs by Takis Katsoulides, reproduces the watercolors of Niki Goulandris with accompanying botanical texts by William T. Stearn of the British Museum and Peter H. Davis of the University of Edinburgh. Information about ordering can be obtained from Friends of the Goulandris Natural History Museum in the United States (212) 369-0405.

SEED DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM

The following seeds are available this fall —

From Gus Sindt

1. '**Pico**' - white single
2. '**Vanity**' - blush jap
3. '**Florence Bruss**' - red single
4. '**Patricia Hanratty**' - pink jap
5. '**Rose Bowl**' - light pink single
6. '**Carrara**' - white jap
7. '**Terry Grudem**' - red jap
8. '**Dawn Pink**' - single
9. '**Bonanza**' - red double
10. And a few seeds of the following:
Cousins 72-11, '**Moonrise**', '**Hazel Brand**', '**Husky**', '**Friendship**'

From Marion DeReamer

1. '**Lotus Queen**' - white jap .
2. '**Walter Marx**' - white single, tall
3. Mixed lactiflora

From Chris Laning

1. '**Sanctus**' x '**Silver Dawn**' F₃
2. Tetraploids from pink & yellow clones
3. Quad F₃ x '**Silver Dawn**' F₃
4. The F₂ from '**Roy Pehrson's Best Yellow**'.
5. '**Vista**' x '**Archangel**'
6. '**Serenade**' F₃
7. Quad F₃ x '**Moonrise**'
8. Red Stripe - lactiflora with red and white striped flower
9. Lactiflora mixture

From Don Hollingsworth

1. Early Pastels Hybrids, better form, open pollinated
2. Early Pastels, fair form, open pollinated, tetraploid
3. Little Reds Hybrids ('**Good Cheer**', etc.) and their seedlings from interbreeding, tetraploid
4. Peregrina, Lobata species (3 clones), tetraploid
5. #870, veined and flared red/purple over ivory, seedling of '**May Music**' x Light Pink Quad F₂, tetraploid
6. #1423, seedling of Roy's '**Silver Dawn**' F₃, veined and bordered delicately in pink over white, tetraploid.
7. #1420, Roy's '**Silver Dawn**' F₃, delicate ivory with lavender points and hint of border. "Points" refers to filaments and stigmas.
8. Mixed suffruticosas
9. Mixed lactifloras

PEONIES 1984

Don Hollingsworth

It's been a tough growing year for peonies in Missouri again this year. That makes three of these — 1984, 1983, and 1980 — out of the last five. And before that I had hail one year which stripped the leaves off of quite a few of the recently transplanted things to where they had a short season, also. Gradually, however, peonies accumulate the size and maturity necessary to produce their typical flowers.

One thing I have noted is that some peonies have the ability to tolerate extreme drought, but retain life in their leaves such that when it rains again we see them perk up and start using the growing season again. Some of the lacti varieties and some of the tree peonies are noteworthy in this respect. I feel we need to be making note of these qualities and retaining them in the gene pool we are using.

The early hybrids and their beautiful color patterns have been spotted by some of Kansas City's more or less elite flower arrangers. Had a call this week from a lady who is planning a couple of dinner celebrations next spring. Last spring we furnished some of the early hybrids and tree peony flowers for a dinner at the major art gallery here, and they apparently went over extra well. This kind of thing certainly makes for some status validation for the new peonies and is selling some here, even though I scarcely have anything to sell.

A few new seedlings to mention this year. Noteworthy are more doubles from crosses of '**Good Cheer**' on various double forms of lacti varieties. Earlier, I had only the bomb type doubling in these hybrids --all-over stamen transformation. Now I have seen progressive stamen transformation — petals starting at the outer edge of the center "ball" and progressing inwardly to stamens or staminodes at the center. The other doubling character which we see is the multi petal quality as in '**Cytherea**', '**Red Red Rose**', '**Carina**', etc. This has not been so evident in the '**Good Cheer**' hybrid seedlings as in the sister Little Red which I have been using about the same length of time and which apparently does not give stamen transformation of the type which results in Jap or bomb form flowers (this is the plant I call Little Red for working purposes, my accession number 95).

From '**Kansas**' by '**Good Cheer**', I have this year bloomed a progressively transformed red double and last year a similar one out of '**Big Ben**'. From a double lacti seedling of '**Kickapoo**' by Little Red I have a super colored red with progressively transformed stamens — this one has pollen but not much fertile. The other two may be more staminode in form of the inner petals and not promising as pollen producers. In addition to this type doublings there is another bomb double of '**Nippon Gold**' by '**Good Cheer**' which has the best form of any of its siblings so far. My multi petal, gleaming intense red of '**Karl Rosenfield**' by '**Good Cheer**' is producing fine flowers but has the common flaw of foliage going bad in appearance in mid-year. It does produce a seed occasionally.

Seed production was interesting in some unusual respects this year. For one I had several seeds on 'Carina' and on 'Ludovica', two which have so far resisted my efforts to get seeds for 10 years or more. Why is this? Ludo was pollinated but I didn't bother to mark the pollinated stems because I didn't expect results anyway, so now I can't tell whether it was my chosen pollen or something the bees were carrying around. If it was pollen compatibility, then self seems the least probable because it has had self pollen all the time, without results for years on end. Or, was it due to better germ cell formation in our unusually long cold spring? There has been speculation that the latter can do it, dating at least to the early 1930's when Stebbins and a man in England, S.O.S. Dark, were studying meiosis in peonies and found that in certain hybrids the findings were different between the pollen mother cells developed in England and those on plants in the Saunders collection in cold upstate New York. Some of the varieties were the same, others were hybrids of the same species, and plants of the same species, so the contrast was attention getting.

My 'Carina' seeds were produced on some plants grown from scraps put out several years ago and there is little question the pollinations were entirely natural — chances are I didn't even look at the flowers, let alone pollinate them in this frantic season!

Other than such aberrations as above, seed production was diminished in both quantity and quality in 1984. All seeds are started for indoor germination, although due to other competing demands most of them were not harvested until quite dry and/or they got dry while others were being accumulated before the various starting dates. This means a later development of rooting.

I planted out about 1,300 seedlings from indoor germination last year of about 3000 seeds started of all kinds, including early tets, lactiflora and some suffruticosa, as well as the F1 hybrid crosses. This is probably the best results I have ever obtained.

In contrast, the year before (1982 seeds) when I also had a large seed production, I gave up being able to carry out the winter work on indoor germination and tried putting the seeds out in later autumn, in beds which I insulated well over winter to reduce freezing. The results were disastrous. Only a few of the earliest planted made plants (these were handled such that I expected a fair germination, or better); there were a half dozen or so plants first year from another frame planted mid-fall, and, none in a third bed planted very late. If there were any germinations in the second spring (1984) I couldn't tell the difference between them and those of older seedlings which were smallish. Was the failure of second spring germination due to winter failure of seeds or to overlooking watering on them during the extremely hot and dry summer of 1983? I can report that it is easy to overlook watering in a place where there is nothing growing, and this may be precisely the reason these seeds failed in such overwhelming proportions.

Now that I feel comfortable with the quality of my results with indoor germination (using moist vermiculite in sandwich plastic bags and the refrigerator for giving the necessary cold period to reduce bud dormancy in the rooted seedlings), I hesitate to subject my seeds to the risks of outdoor planting. However, any system that works is good enough, operator's choice!

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Alphen aan den Rijn, September 3rd, 1984

My dear friend,

I have well received one letter of you without date that reached here on the 14th of June and another dated August 14th, that I have just at hand.

You must be thinking that I am a creature without a heart, but not so!

I am coming every 4 to 6 weeks to the U.S. and as I never know exactly when, I have been telephoning to you every time the day before my departure, and often, if there was any time left, from Cleveland or Chicago. As your number I have: (616) 342-4370. I have once had an answer, and the gentleman told me, that he did not know where you were.

I do not give up on the idea yet, to come and see you, but please give me some alternative telephone numbers of people who could tell me where you are, so that I can arrange something.

I think I am going to get a plant for you this time of the Paeonia tenuifolia Rosea. If there are other kinds you would want from here, do let me know. I will try to ship in the course of October.

I expect that your last year's Peony seeds have germinated in average about 40%, but there is plenty good seed more and I expect the remainder to follow next spring. I will keep you informed. I plan to leave all in position till at least next September.

I have no word of Mrs. Goulandrís recently, but expect her books to come my way when ready. Yours will be sent Airmail the day it arrives. It certainly is going to be an exquisite book. Everything she does is exquisite!

I am very interested indeed to get more Peony seeds from you and I have no limit as to the number that I can plant.

Last week Saturday afternoon I visited Roy Klehm. I am intending to order a collection from him. Could I buy some plants from you?

This year we have been through a tremendous expansion of our business. We now employ over sixty people.

Production of seeds is now well under control and our area of production has increased to about 150 acres out doors and 5½ acres under glass, in addition about 25 acres outdoors and 2 acres under glass for research. We have now employed also an American Doctor of genetics, Robert Campbell of St. Paul, University of Minnesota, apart from three Dutch engineers.

I still endeavour to obtain a copy of Sir Frederick Stern's book on Peonies, so far in vain. Rest assured the day will come that I obtain a copy for you. But it is a scarce book nowadays and much sought after. It is on my want list with at least two dozen second hand and antiquarian book dealers.

How did the Peony 'Pink Giant' behave for you? It might well be too early to tell. But probably you will find that it comes to leaf not less than two months after the others and being that late in leaf, it does not flower all that late. It is a very different clone. Do you think it is possible to get plants of 'Goldilocks' and the true 'Oriental Gold' from the Gilbertson stock? I am very interested in these both.

Apart from any Peony I do not have, I am particularly keen on buying more of outstanding ones such as 'Red Charm' would you know of any source. This is now a proven very promising commercial variety to me.

Any extra earlies, extra tall, extra beautifuls and specials are of particular interest for the European market at this stage.

With my very best wishes, also for your wife, in which my dear Elisabeth joins, I now remain,

Yours very sincerely,
K. SAHIN, Zaden

Kees

Kees Sanin

Via AIRMAIL