

PAEONIA

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RR #4, Box 2768
Atkinson, WI 53538
November 21, 1987

Dear Chris:

As always it was nice hearing from you. Happy to hear that the Ito's arrived safely and in good shape. Now if they will set a seed or two. When pollinating, you might mix Lacti and lutea tree hybrids. This could save a few years. My first priority is seed. My second is where it came from. This you can do through the process of elimination

Ito seed crop for '87 was very good with over 100 new ones planted. However, seed loss was greater. I do not count seed anymore, but those that went soft covered the bottom of a 5 gallon pail. I wish I could find an answer for this.

Once again many different pollens were used on many different lacti seed parents. Most of them being seedlings. I keep searching for another seed parent like '**Martha W.**', but maybe I'm expecting too much. However, many of the new seedlings produce Ito seed, not in such great numbers.

Blooming Ito's for '87 were not as many as expected — 45 were of blooming age, with only 10 producing bloom. Eight of those 10 produced incomplete flowers, 4 of which were from D-256 pollen, a '**Tria**' seedling. Of the two with normal bloom 81-19 was a semi double yellow which was very nice and with very good plant habit. The other, 83-16 was a single about the color of '**Paula Fay**' (glowing pink). It also had real good foliage and plant habit. So now I look for spring 1988 when there will be 150 or so blooming age plus the 35 left from this year. I'm sure all will not bloom, but it is something to hope for.

F₂ Ito's are all doing well. Those from Ito pollen onto lacti are now 2 and 3 years old, would expect to see bloom on the 3 year old in a year or two. The seedling from Ito seed will be 2 next year and looks real healthy. I guard this one with my life as it's the only I have and maybe the only one I get for a while as there was no Ito seed produced this year. This seedling is out of seed from my big double yellow '**Bartzella**'.

This year, sad to say, time for me was scarce and I barely met my obligation for plants promised. However, this is nothing new. Anyway I only manage to dig and divide one of my Ito's. That was '**Bartzella**'. Divisions were few, but several grafts were made. If all take, my number of small Bartzellas will be 24, Others will be propagated next year and hopefully will be offered in a few short years.

As you know, Chris, 1989 the National Show is tentatively scheduled for the Mall at Janesville, Wisconsin. By that time I should have many Ito's of blooming age. Since I live only about 11 miles from Janesville, many will be able to observe these beautiful hybrids. Hopefully arrangements can be made.

Will close for now in hopes of visiting you next bloom season. Thanks for the invitation.

- Roger Anderson

DATE: November 11, 1987
FROM: Don Hollingsworth Peonies
TO: Peony Friends and Respondents
SUBJECT: Failure of Offering List and Apologies

Dear Friends:

Three months ago I felt I could move peony fields, handle marketing communications, and ship orders while still meeting my obligations to ongoing client agreements in my consulting service.

Well, the consulting clients have had some service, the field move has gone forward, albeit slowly, but marketing of plants has considerably fallen through the slats.

There was no list. Some aggressive inquiries (by telephone) did result in shipments and a lot of plants have simply gone to the field to be supply for the future if anyone is still interested!

Meanwhile, I have a couple of more weeks to get out what I can with a reasonable chance of getting them back into the ground. Unfortunately there will be a good many valuable plants still at the old site, the problem is that the owner of that land has offered it for sale and my agreement for time to remove plants as far as a purchaser is concerned runs, out this fall. Hopefully, my landlady will still make her sale and the new owner will have flexibility enough for me to get out plants next fall.

The new planting is in a pleasant location on our own premises. There is plenty of room. It is the farmstead of Bernice's childhood home. We have a home there and I hope that in 3-4 years we can spend the hybridizing season there in residence. The farm is 85 miles north, near Maryville, Missouri.

At the new location propagation is being scheduled. Presumably plants will be offered on a more deliberate schedule also. There will be new introductions over the next three years from those already propagating, and new seedlings are being selected. I am looking forward to semi-retirement and putting these youngsters out into competition so we can see how they are going to stand. Meanwhile, thanks again and best wishes for the coming season.

- Don Hollingsworth
5831 No. Colrain
Kansas City, Missouri 64151

MAYDAY MAYDAY MAYDAY MAYDAY MAYDAY MAYDAY

MAYDAY! Is that the correct signal when the ship seems to be floundering and not in control of where it is going? That's what I'm trying to get at anyway.

More than twenty years ago some folks with a vision set sail on a course intended to discover and introduce new varieties of peony the like of which has only been imagined. Only the surface had been scratched, it was said, in the pioneering work of hybridization which had gone before.

And many unique plants were cut apart and distributed. The existing gene pool was shared. Robin letters circulated and information was shared. Crosses were made. And lo, in the course of time peonies the like of which had only been imagined did in fact appear among the seedlings.

And, additional promising parent stock was cut apart, and distributed. Seeds were sent out and more seedlings appeared. More robin letters circulated. Publications grew in circulation and readership. Superb management appeared and the Peony Society prospered.

Gardeners everywhere gained a renewed interest in peonies. Demand for plants grew. Nurserymen had to increase their production to meet the demand. More peonies were sent out to gardens than had happened for many years.

And grumbling was heard. Readers of the news on hybridizing went to the shows, and looked for the new hybrids the like of which had only been imagined, but which were not reported to be in the originators garden — and in his friends' gardens — and were so glowingly described in the letters. But these new phenoms were scarce on the seedling tables. Were there really new peonies? So the excitement remained much with the "old" peonies.

And more grumbling was heard. In the show the old peonies were much divided in separate classes and the new peonies were too much lumped. The new peonies, of course, were too scarce to put much pressure on the classes, so why make more classes? WELL, then, the show must be at the wrong time of the season!

SO?

In fact, much is well. Recognition of peonies on the part of gardeners is much enhanced. And, it's not just because some of us got interested in hybridizing. There has been a lot of effort expended by the Society's membership in many ways over the past 15 years or so. The new publications probably deserve more of the plaudits than any other single category of effort.

Something that has done more for us than anything else, perhaps, is the maturation of a green revolution that has been going on for the last twenty years or so. We have a new generation of gardeners in the suburbs and they're in the inner city, too. As time goes by these gardeners have sought more sophisticated subjects — perennials, landscaping.

Thankfully, the old peonies are in good supply and the people who are selling them are doing a good job of presentation, including a good measure of color illustrations. A lot of demand is being met with North American production, though importation of peony plants continues to be part of the United States balance of trade deficit.

WHEREFORE THE NEW PEONIES?

Emergence of the new hybrids seems indeed bogged down. However, my experience suggests what can be done about it:

New variety propagation.

New variety distribution.

New variety exhibition.

PROPAGATION

The only way a new variety is going to have any recognition is to get it out where the people who might care can see it. My own experience around Kansas City is that, in many ways, the "people who might care" will come hunting you. Newspapers have color capability nowadays. Peonies in color make a great splash. Programs for clubs, for special events — some halfway decent slides spell popularity for a willing advocate.

Something that puts a powerful multiplier into this local (and beyond local) public awareness is for the really interested folks to have choice and rare (to them) plants growing in their own gardens.

Growth of interest feeds on itself, but without propagation, the Best New Peony in the World GETS LEFT OUT. The pressure of growing new interest simply finds an outlet somewhere else.

DISTRIBUTION

Distribution can't happen without propagation, but it requires something more if it's going to happen usefully. Furthermore, it doesn't happen very well by accident. It needs to be carried out purposefully.

The chances for genuine recognition of the real worth of a new variety is virtually nil without distribution. And, it perhaps goes without saying, for, the appreciation of worth to develop without undue waste of time (years) some attention should be given to targeting — distribution to folks whose skill is adequate and whose flowers are likely to be seen. That is where the members of The American Peony Society and other active gardener organizations are absolutely essential.

Although not every important advance in new varieties is going to attract Certificate of Merit or Gold Medal recognition, every important advance contributes to what might come in the next generation of seedlings. When a new advance is sent out where it can be seen, it inevitably becomes a part of the imagination of others — a motivator.

That is where we are with every new peony. There is going to have to be some propagation and distribution for each to make its showing. And, the peony exhibitions are not going to change, the classes are not going to change and the dates are not going to change — not just IN ANTICIPATION of the new peonies. The changes will come when the new peonies become an important factor in numbers and varieties shown.

EXHIBITION

How do we get the exhibition numbers up? It's the same for either the new peonies or the traditional peonies. The NUMBERS of exhibitors seem never very impressive. All too often, in recent years, the bulk of the exhibits are the result of five or so exhibitors.

The answer, I believe, is to be found in generating more persons with the needed skills to make a good showing. This doesn't happen very dependably by accident, if what has been going on in recent years is any indication. It will, no doubt, help for those of us who may wish it would happen to do something about the matter. I'm including myself here, incidentally.

We must note, unfortunately, there is nothing about being a breeder that necessarily correlates with a drive to get out in exhibition competition. A breeder competes against himself and with his or her peers at a rather esoteric level. We aren't required to abide by a set of guidelines from outside to gauge whether we are doing well. There's protection in that — we can fix the guidelines over again after every new seedling flowers, if we want to, in order to find some little achievement or another.

But, it may be more than a little arrogant to suppose the gardening world is going to rush to our doorsteps and wait around for something to develop for them. It will be upon someone else's schedule when the new peonies may get recognition in the shows and the Society awards, unless we do take a purposeful interest in the matter. If we sit back and wait for others, the recognition is going to come later rather than sooner — you can count on it.

PROPAGATION, DISTRIBUTION, EXHIBITION

It takes all three. Commercial peony specialists will pick up on part of the task, but the initial propagation opportunity is in the hands of the originator. If not done, then those years are lost. A third party will want to see that the quality is present before a plant is given a priority for space and time.

Distribution, too, is initially in the hands of the originator. We need to take advantage of one another to get plants out into other areas for exposure to local differences in growing conditions and for exposure to third party evaluation. This initial distribution should be planned with an eye to facilitating exhibition — there is also the potential that exhibitors will feel an incentive for attracting the newest plants to their collections early in distribution. The concept of guest plants is well established in other plant societies.

When the seedlings flower and prove a joy to the originator, the task has just begun. Failure to recognize this and failure to act upon it threatens the very survival of the system by, which the effort has been supported for the past 15-20 years, during which most of us have built our gene pool for peony breeding. It is up to us, if this system needs to evolve. The way in which I see that we can shape that evolution is by giving a priority to propagation, distribution and exhibition.

Dear Reader: I for one hope that you are numbered among those who want to see the larger picture preserved and to see that an appropriate place is provided in the scheme of that larger picture for the new peonies, and for the still newer peonies that will then follow.

Everyone's help counts. Make your influence felt!

Best wishes for a good winter and an exciting hybridising season. Then let's all try to find some places to exhibit flowers in our own localities. And, let no opportunity get by to help out in the national exhibitions.

Sincerely,

Don Hollingsworth

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PEONY STEVENIANA

Nancey Ann Halas

Mr. Walter Erhardt of West Germany reports a new yellow peony, reading a Russian book. The peony is reported as having one flower per stem, 70-100 cm. high. The leaves are three lobed. The flowers resemble Trollius (not open). The flower color is a smooth yellow (nearly white). It is reported as native to the Caucas Mountains. It appears to be a variety of P. Wittmanniana.

For the more adventurous breeders, it would appear to be a cross of Trollius by Caltha Polypetala. Caltha is three lobed leaf structure and is often called the Giant Marigold. It has golden yellow flowers in trusses. The leaves are stated to be ten inches across. The flowers are three inches in diameter.

In a cross of this type, which would likely be the forerunner of a new species, the seeds would be the normal size on either Caltha or Trollius. Of the flowers the majority would not survive to reach a full grown status, but then the F-1 would or should begin to have the characteristic peony type pea size seeds. I would imagine that it would be exciting to follow the creation of a new Peony species from the original divergent crosses. We have always let the bees do it for us and then take the plant find in that way. Not to say that we don't appreciate the spontaneous effort of the bees, it is just that we are always tempted to follow the points of origin more closely and less willing to wait hundreds, or thousands of years for an interesting natural cross to take place. After all, will we be here to see it?

MISCELLANEOUS TOPICS

Bill Seidl

FIRST-BLOOM SEEDLINGS. A mild winter (-12° F. was the coldest and that for only a short duration) allowed many shrub (tree) hybrids to bloom well, some of the older ones as they had never bloomed before. The most noteworthy newest seedlings were . . .

#42 - '**Golden Era**' x '**Alice Harding**'. Double, rather dull yellow with reddish fleckings and edging. Six blooms. Fertile pollen.

#46 - A197 x '**Chinese Dragon**'. 10 petals, quite clear medium purple, dark flares, sterile cream stamens. One flower, which produced six hollow seed by Suisho Haku pollen, a hopeful sign that it is seed-fertile by more compatible pollen. Seems to be a darker version of 'Anna Mari'e (#13, from A197 x D223).

#50 - ('**Age of Gold**' x D223) x (D223 x '**Chinese Dragon**'). The seedling parents are yellow (#8) and purplish-red (#11). This is a rusty, dusky red, 12-13 petals. Its claim to fame so far is twofold: it bloomed as a three-year old, and its one flower produced 10 firm seed by #42 pollen. Its pollen is also fertile.

In the herbaceous hybrids, only one new seedling stood out:

82SDLC-1 -- '**Salmon Dream**' x '**Lemon Chiffon**'. Not yellow or even salmon, as I expected, but rose-pink of a distinctive double form: a "plate" of wide guard petals displays a modest heaping of smaller petals with a clearly exposed center of carpels and stamens. (Perhaps with age it will develop bomb-double form, but I like the form as is.) A five-year old plant with seven stems, six flowering, no laterals. Medium height; very sturdy stems; rain during full bloom barely bent them.

I divided this plant very late (Nov. 24) and obtained five divisions without, luckily, losing a root. This seedling has the Reath breeding stamp all over it. I received '**Salmon Dream**' from David when it was still a numbered seedling and he allowed me to take some pollen from '**Lemon Chiffon**' at the nursery when it was blooming for only the second time (1982).

THE ANDERSON GARDEN. On a visit there I brought a bloom of the SDLC seedling and also #42. Roger used the latter's pollen on '**Martha W.**' for the Ito cross which he tenaciously pursues. This fall he reported good results from that combination. The garden, potted seedlings, and seed flats displayed a fascinating variety of crosses but the memory of '**Bartzella**' in full bloom dominates all else. It has such superb stems holding its yellow flowers proudly above the foliage! (Roger pointed out the wheel tracks of where a run-away jeep just the previous day had left its parked position and just missed flattening '**Bartzella**'.) Roy Klehm was there the next day and snapped a picture of it with Roger standing alongside just as proudly. On Oct. 14 I attended a symposium at the Chicago Botanic Garden on trees and shrubs where Roy was one of the speakers. In his slide selection he had slipped in the above picture of Roger with '**Bartzella**'. (It did not fit the symposia subject, but his excuse was that he wanted to show that amateurs are often responsible for the creation of new

plants.) While the audience oohed and ahed I was poking two friends alongside, saying, "I know that guy! I know that guy!" Roy also showed slides of hardy rhododendrons (some of the PJM type), little known and/or new magnolias, and some very attractive flowering crabs by Father John Fiala, who some readers will remember for a stimulating Bulletin article about Ito hybridizing. (No follow-up articles ever appeared so I surmise many of his seedlings may have proved to be "false hybrids" or contaminates and others to bear incomplete flowers, the same fate that befell most of Roy Pehrson's Ito seedlings.) Roger is also the first to be growing some genuine Ito F₂'s, but that is a story best left for him to explain and enlarge upon.

TERMS. I think a conscious effort should be made to replace the term "tree" peony with "shrub" peony. Also, I'd then propose that Ito hybrids be called "shrubaceous" hybrids — shrub plus herbaceous but spelled with a single "b". Finally, I'd suggest that the Itō-spelling should be accepted (or at least tolerated in individual usage) without attaching the final "h". This would be consistent with the widely accepted Hepburn system of romanizing the Japanese language. A similar inconsistency would be to spell Japan's capitol city as "Tohkyoh". I've read that after Mr. Itō's death his widow expressed a preference for the h-spelling, but since Mr. Itō was presumably never a U. S. citizen with a legally recorded surname (such as Bakker for Baker, or Greene for Green), not everyone should be forced to follow her whim. The line above the "o" merely indicates an extra-long o-sound but is usually omitted by printers (as it is in Tokyo) out of ignorance of its true significance.

ANNA MARIE. I've swapped grafted plants with several people, most of them readers of Paeonia. In one grafting bed a row of AM was followed by 3 grafts of D276. This fall I discovered the D276 label submerged underground and one plant missing... which means it was mistakenly sent out as AM. If any reader received it, let me know and I'll send the genuine article next fall.

In using AM for hybridizing I'm discovering it "nicks" with '**Shintenchi**' pollen, producing 17 seeds this past season, three in one carpelhead. This is much better than with any other pollen tried, including other moutans or even such fertile hybrids as '**Golden Era**'. None have rooted so far in indoor germination but I have one first-year seedling from a few seeds harvested last year. What can be the explanation for this unexpected fertility?

THREE-YEAR SEEDLINGS THAT BLOOM. Shrub hybrid #50 was the first to do so in my garden but there are about a half-dozen two-year olds that appear capable of the same feat. I've read that this is not uncommon with Japanese growers and I think Chris has had similar experiences. I hope such news will encourage others to take up shrub hybridizing who may have been discouraged by report of 8-10 years to FB (first bloom), especially in connection with the Daphnis program. The secret appears to be in providing enough TLC to induce the 1st-year seedling to produce 2,3, or 4 leaves that first year. One leaf, 5-6 years to FB; 2-4 leaves, then 3-4 years to FB.



Dear Ms. Greta M. Kessenich,

I wonder if you can help me get seeds or living plants of the two American species of Paeonia, P. brownii and P. californica.

I have tried for years, but without any success to get these two species as I would like to try growing them in Sweden. It is possible that they are not hardy enough, but who knows before trying.

Please try to help me. I will of course be willing to pay for any costs.

yours sincerely,

Ulf Eliasson

PAEONIANS:

Can any one of us supply the seeds requested by Mr. Eliasson? I'd like a few of them too!

- Chris

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June 5, 1987

Dear Chris —

Here is that wayward contribution to PAEONIA. I seem to be seeing California from the inside of hospitals. April 16, I had a second open heart surgery at Stanford University — released on the 30th — returned for a week May 18th for leg surgery — complete healing is taking place!

I see Toichi Domoto every week. A more dear friend couldn't be. The tree peony season here was rather short. Am surprised at the number of herbaceous peonies growing in mild Castro Valley.

Filoli Gardens in Hillsborough, CA. is a huge estate left to the Federal Government. Toichi has offered them several hundred tree peonies for a specimen planting but they haven't responded very favorably. If they were to see the Hamilton, Ontario, or Gratwick plantings, I'm sure they would respond.

I am trying to reach someone who can accept this general offer.

Toichi mentioned that the Itoh hybrid (Imperial?) bloomed very favorably this year. Best personal regards.

- Howard Burnette, 4866 Seven Hills Rd.
Castro Valley, CA.