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*A BLESSED CHRISTMAS*

*AND*

*A HAPPY NEW YEAR*

*TO ALL OUR READERS*

*Chris and Lois*



## IRIS COUNTRY

ROGER R. NELSON  
6219 TOPAZ ST. N.E.  
BROOKS, OR 97305  
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18 November 1990

Chris Laning  
553 West F Avenue  
Kalamazoo MI 49007

Chris:

Many days and even years have passed since I last wrote you; but I have not forgotten about peonies or peony people. Leaving a depressed agricultural economy in a small Nebraska town and getting re-established has been somewhat hard; but I am on the gaining side now. I closed my small retail business (clothing) and left Nebraska in the late summer of 1987 and moved to Portland. Nearby I quartered my irises for a couple of seasons while I commenced looking for property that I could qualify for a loan to purchase. In the summer of 1988, I managed to find a good acreage near Salem and qualify for the Farm Credit Loan that was currently on the property. I moved in to the house by September 1st and worked to get the irises down here in the next season. I have spent every spare minute working on a new garden and have made great progress toward a new iris display garden and one that also will feature dwarf conifers and hybrid and tree peonies. I had the finest collection of hybrid and tree peonies in the Nebraska, Iowa area and lost them all. I had a verbal agreement with the Doctor that purchased my property back in Nebraska to get the peonies a month or two after I moved (It was so hot and dry when I moved). When Nebraska iris friends arrived in early October to dig the peonies, he promptly run them off the property and said what I did not take with me was his. Because I had nothing in writing to back up my "gentlemen's agreement" claim, I lost all of the peonies. I am slowly working back up with a collection; but it was very depressing to me to lose everything after selling him the property for less than one fourth of what I had in it.

At any rate, I am getting back on my feet slowly. I work at one of the nicest department stores in the country - Nordstrom in Salem and live just 15 miles from work. I literally live from paycheck to paycheck (but so do other Americans); and I am putting everything I can spare into the garden. I introduced three new TB irises this year that are doing well and will have three next year. Roy Klehm has been very generous in helping me get started with peonies again. He is one heck of a prince of a person!

Back in 1985 I wrote you about your two new yellow tree peonies - '**Sunny Boy**' and '**Sunny Girl**'. At that time you mentioned it would be 1990 about before any stock would be available. You also mentioned that Roy was growing one or both. Will you have either available in 1991? I still love tree peonies and will save those special ones. I am hoping to be

able to afford one or the other next summer (fall). What other tree peonies of distinction do you have available for 1991 delivery? Do you grow any of the Ito hybrids and offer them for sale?

I have not placed you on the list for an iris catalog from here - do you grow any hybrid TB irises? I am still working the lines that were leading me to increased vigor and winter tolerance that I was working in Nebraska. Too many TB irises are a bit tender now in cold climates. That is they end up rotting due to winter damage.

I am going to try and get my membership back in the American Peony Society - had to drop it due to lack of funds when I first moved. Moving really brought about much confusion, some home sickness, and other problems. But, I tried to settle down as fast as possible and not look back.. I am completely happy now that I made the change before I was too old to do so. The climate with its rain all winter makes me miss a little of the Midwest: but I do not miss the constant wind and high summer humidity. I will never go back other than to visit friends.

Must close and get some breakfast and then off to work. It will be nice to hear from you - please let me know on the above items.

- Roger

p.s. Back in Nebraska in '87, I was seeking a plant of the Ben Gilbertson outstanding P. tenuifolia Rubra Plena. Do you have this available or does anyone you know?

REPLY FROM CHRIS:

Dear Roger:

You will probably be unhappy to learn that my '**Sunny Boy**' and '**Sunny Girl**' are NOT tree peonies! They are advanced generation tetraploid hybrids with yellow flowers. Most of my stock has gone to the most active of hybridizers since their value is mainly in their great hybridizing potentials. When fellow hybridists develop enough stock to offer for sale, the general collectors (connoisseurs) will be offered these clones.

At present (next fall) '**Sunny Girl**' will be available at \$50 per division but '**Sunny Boy**' stock is too small for distribution. Unless you plan to do some hybridizing, these two clones will have only limited value.

I have no price list since merchandizing of peonies is not of interest to me. Itoh hybrids, and I have many of them, will be sold at \$50 per division.

A number of the newer iris varieties are growing in my garden. They are beautiful, especially in bouquets for church.

- Chris

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10 October 1990

Dear Chris

RE: PEONY SEEDS

I am writing to see whether any seeds are available this year. Last year the seed arrived about x-mas, our summer. I immediately placed them in containers containing moist vermiculite and many had produced roots by the time the weather cooled off in fall. I then transferred them to large pots with soil and left them outside in a sheltered spot over our winter (our area has heavy frosts and snow nearby but not at our town).

This spring there were many shoots and now there are many small Peonies growing merrily in their pots merely 10 months since you posted them!

The previous year's Tree Peony seeds were not quite so successful, but I do have 15 young plants now growing in the ground although they are still quite small.

In our area Tree Peonies and Hybrids tend to be better than the later Herbaceous Peonies which tend to be affected by nematodes (I do not use poisons but try to add organic material to keep them growing strongly). The first Tree Peonies have just started flowering this week and some Hybrid buds are colouring although some later varieties are still in dormancy and are missing the present vigorous growing conditions. (Lilac, Apples, Cherries, Early Roses, Dutch Iris, Freesias, Ixias are out at present as well).

Later we have a very dry hot summer. Our latitude is approximately 35 degrees South while Loyang, China is the same latitude North. So it seems that Tree Peonies should do very well here with sufficient summer watering.

I would appreciate "Tree" seeds and very early Hybrid seeds if available (and perhaps "Itoh" crosses if supplies permit). I have a Lutea "Alice Harding" and will try crossing its pollen with a few early Semidouble whites this year although I am very amateurish in Hybridising.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

Geoff Pritchard

834 Jackson Street  
Albany, California 94706

September 1, 1990

Chris Laning  
553 West F Avenue  
Kalamazoo, MI 49007

Dear Chris:

Enclosed herewith are seeds from *Paeonia californica* and *brownii*, as promised. I would like to have given you more seed of both but, regrettably; there is a limited supply this year because we have had four years of drought. I will be able to supply more seed in the future if you want.

There are two sources for peony *californica*. The seed was collected at Reservoir Canyon, elevation 500', on a west-facing slope, San Luis Obispo, San Luis Obispo County. Plants were growing in a scrub area in clay soil, between serpentine rock; collected August 1990.

The second source was seed collected at Tilden Botanic Garden, Berkeley, California; the specimen plant originally came from Boulder Oaks, San Diego County, California.

Peony *brownii* seed was collected between Paradise Valley and Granite Mountain, elevation 7,050' on a south-facing slope, Humboldt County, Nevada. Plants were growing on rocky clayey soil; collected September 1989.

You asked me what peony species I had. I have:

<i>P. lutea ludlowii</i>	<i>P. cambessedesii</i>
<i>P. broteroi</i>	<i>P. delavayi</i>
<i>P. officinalis alba</i>	<i>P. officinalis</i>
<i>P. russi</i>	<i>P. russi leioicarpa</i> (??)
<i>P. mascula</i>	<i>P. arietina</i>
<i>P. suffruticosa</i> "Rocks"	

Could I get from you Toichi Domoto's select *suffruticosa* seed? By the way, the Miss America seed you sent me seems to be doing well; some of the plants are up and I expect a good percentage of the seed to come up next spring. The *lactiflora* seed you sent me was labeled "*lactiflora* mix." I thought *lactiflora* was a white flowered peony; can you tell me what "mix" means?

Finally, should you hear of any species seed available, I would be very pleased to hear about it.

Good luck with the seed,

All the best,

Wayne Demmel

LETTER – Re: Seed Distribution

311 Providence  
Brooklyn, Conn. 06234

October 30, 1990

Hi Chris:

Herewith are over 1700 seeds, field pollinated from mainly Lobata and some hybrids from Klehm's Estate - a few old fashioned plants -Jules Esleie - Sarah Bernhardt - Maximum Festiva - Primevere; Doubles - Singles - Jap singles - anemones

Also some F-3 seeds from seedlings parentage unknown / lost ID - and some Miss America in individual envelopes. I sent to the seed pool last year - Bill Seidl - but Greta informs me he no does it anymore. So until I find out who to send to please excuse my ignorance, and hope the members can use them..

- John F. Greh

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Hi Chris:

Here's more seeds for the pool, over 1700. Last year sent out 2500 to Bill Seidl; did not know you had taken over.

Lactiflora - field pollinated - singles - Japs doubles - mostly from Klehm's Estate - Miss America - Sarah Bemdhart - Beute Westerner -Jenny Lind - Nick Shaylor - Primevere - some red - pink unidentified -Festiva Maximus - Kelway's Glorious - hybrid mixed in them. A bad year for me as weather was hot-dry but very humid. All seed soaked in 10% Clorox 30+ hours - sun dried. Had to find out who was seed handler so that's why I'm late. Thanks to Sept. Issue #275 P-23, saw your name. Some of these seeds are F3 - Bonanza - Raspberry Sundae -Pink Lemonade - Santa Fe - Bowl of Cream - Marie Stuart, an old fashioned white double, no ID. A few bi-colors - anemone. Do tell and others, a large white double (No ID) plant over 60 years old. Some old red and pink - just plain seeds - but quite a few surprises and some good looking ones. Seidl has a seedling of cream double. Maybe it'll help you out. Thanks.

- John F. Greh

6-14-90

Dear Chris and Lois,

Here's my yearly contribution for PAEONIA.

Thanks for your labors in putting the hybridizers' newsletter together.

I too have been looking at small-growing peonies (not necessarily small flowers though). I like "White Queen" and "Hakuchow" for their small size. Have gathered pollen from White Queen to use on lutea hybrids.

Am wondering if it would be possible to start a "question and answer" section in our PAEONIA? Seems I have more suggestions without answers.

For instance, as an enthusiastic amateur I would like to know the following:

(1) What lactiflora(s) (white) can be used as seed parent (seed fertile) that are smaller growing (around 20 inches roughly) with sturdy strong stems that can be used on Itoh cross that produce complete flowers? I saw variety called "Bridal Gown" (bomb type I believe in Wayside catalog) and was wondering about its usefulness in Itoh cross.

(2) What lutea hybrids (yellow and/or blended yellow) produce seeds when pollinated with Japanese tree peony pollen? Here I would want to accomplish use of White Queen or Hakuchow to incorporate smaller size and achieve upright-facing flowers.

Of the lutea hybrids I have put JTP pollen on are: Golden Era, Exotic Era, Age of Gold, High Noon, Spring Carnival. So far no success! However Exotic Era does produce abundant seed with viable lutea hybrid pollen!

I am especially fond of Spring Carnival. It was gorgeous this spring. I would be delighted to get offspring that looked like it in flower form and color with compact plant habit.

What are the prospects of a pollen exchange? Does this need to be worked out with individuals as opposed to using PAEONIA as an avenue to procure pollen sources? Maybe you can shed some light here.

Also, what are the prospects of fertility in the Advanced Generation Luteas? Is a source to be found for these to those interested in using them for breeding purposes. Chris, I have found that the large peony growers do not respond to inquiries about advanced generation lutea hybrids. I think there ought to be emphasis put on making plants that are good breeders available (for a price) to those who are sincere about using them.

Well, I've had a lot of things on my mind it looks like.

Chris, could you put a brief note in PAEONIA about location of annual show and dates? I do not receive the bulletin as I was wanting information on breeding.

I guess the winter breeders' meeting that was suggested has fallen through the cracks. Nothing more was said. I'm interested!

Thanks again for your help to us peony devotees.

- Jackie Janson

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Letter from: Mrs. Beverly Phillips  
118 Swaine Avenue  
Toorak Gardens  
South Australia 5065

October 2, 1990

Dear Mr. Laning:

I am writing to ask if I may yet again prevail on your generosity regarding peony seed. I have had seed from you for the past two years and have been quite amazed by the very high germination rate. In particular I have a bed of healthy and promising advanced generation tetraploid hybrids. Our lack of winter cold makes the lactifloras disappointing - they often suffer from lack of stem elongation - so I am hoping that something nice will come out of the hybrids. I also have some very nice one and two year old tree peony seedlings coming on.

If possible, would I be able to have some more herbaceous hybrid seed, especially if available from early blooming parents? Also tree peony seed, either *P. suffruticosa* or hybrid seed, if available. Small quantities would be very gratefully received.

I hope that I may be able to reciprocate one day. I have some *P. cambessedesii* which I hope will flower next season. I also have some tree peonies which are probably hybrids between *P. lutea* and *P. delavayi*. They flowered last year but no viable seed developed. I hope for better things this year.



## ADVANCED GENERATION SEEDS — WHAT ARE THEY?

These are great days for the peony hybridizer! The basic work of crossing the various species with each other has been done and the process of increasing fertility of difficult crosses is progressing at a satisfactory rate. The main "blood lines" that species (wild) peonies afford gives us a gene bank that offers great and almost limitless opportunities for new phenotypes.

Professor (Dr.) Saunders laid the groundwork by making the initial species crosses. Later, Mr. Roy Pehrson accumulated many of Saunders' species crosses and by working with them had increased fertility in succeeding generations. Seeds and plants of his production and collection have been disseminated to various hybridists. I did get quite a collection of his stuff.

Silvia Saunders writes:

“Notebook #1 contains records of all the herbaceous hybrids having as one parent *P. albiflora* (*lactiflora*), in its many varieties.

Notebook #3 contains accounts of all the herbaceous hybrids not having *p. albiflora* in their parentage at all. Books #1 and #3, therefore, cover virtually his entire work with the herbaceous peonies.”

Copies of these two books have been sent to me as reference material.

But just what is included that makes up the advanced generation plants and seeds? You can find a list and description of hybrids that we work with in Editor Wister's "The Peonies", pages 93 through 96. For those of you that don't have the book, below is a list of hybrids that make up the gene bank of the advanced generation hybrids.

1. *albiflora* x *anomala* F<sub>2</sub>
2. *albiflora* x *coriacea*
3. *albi* x *emodi*
4. *albi* x *macrophylla*
5. *albi* x *albi* x *macrophylla*
6. *albi* x *officinalis*
7. *officinalis* x *albiflora*
8. *officinalis* x *officinalis decora*
9. *officinalis* x *decora alba*
10. *albi* x *lobata* (from Perry)
11. *officinalis lobata* x *albiflora*
12. *albi* x Otto Froebel
13. Otto Froebel x *albi*
14. *albi* x *ozieri albi*

15. albi x wittmanniana
16. wittmanniana x albi
17. anamala beresowski x emodi
18. veitchi x emodi
19. corsica x macrophylla
20. mloko x macro
21. mloko x tenuifolia
22. off. x coriacea
23. off x macro
24. off x decora alba
25. alba x off x macro
26. albi x off x macro x mloko

The mixing of these species is going on at a rapid rate so after a while from this mixing pot will come a product of unknown qualities as varied as the American people themselves.

- Chris Laning

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LETTER FROM: Maurice Ménard  
 1194 Montee Champagne, RR 3  
 Ste. Dorothee, Laval, P.Q.  
 Canada

October 15, 1990

Dear Chris:

I'm late. I nevertheless take the chance you will be able to distribute the enclosed peony seeds (hybrids) to members. They are the result from seeds you sent me in 1982, 83 and 84.

I have not enough space to sow them or even to propagate the plants I would feel worth it. Nobody in my family or other person I know will be interested in any of my seedlings or plants in the future and I am nearly 75 and my health is decreasing. But I will continue growing peonies and other plants as long as possible.

I hope being able to drive to Hamilton next June and enjoy to see for the first time in my life some of the best peonies of the world.

Friendly yours, (Maurice Ménard)

ED. NOTE:

Maurice sent us four packets of hybrid seeds for distribution for which we can thank him. His letter has a sad note in it - no one to take over! I feel I have the same sad problem.

- Chris