

*Life Sci*

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NO. 268



# The American Peony Society Bulletin



*Hybrid peony LOVELY ROSE (Saunders 1942)—from the garden of Greta Kessenich.  
Photographed by Eileen Swanson, Hopkins, Minnesota.*

*Announcing*

The limited  
publication of  
a "TABLE TOP"  
edition devoted  
exclusively to

**AMERICAN  
TREE  
PEONIES**



**Appended cultural notes cover:**

- *Tree Peony history*
- *Planting and general culture*
- *Propagation by root grafting of scions*
- *Pruning, fertilization, winter protection, etc.*

Compiled and edited by  
Greta M. Kessenich;  
photos by Roy Klehm  
and David Reath

*The*  
**AMERICAN  
TREE  
PEONY**

**63 BRILLIANT FULL  
COLOR PHOTOS**

True, tree peonies with their 1400 year history are not native to America. But a class of exceptional HYBRID tree peonies are. Efforts by seven world renowned American hybridizers\* who successfully cross-pollinated *P. Lutea* with *P. Suffructicosa* are covered in this limited edition. Photos are razor sharp in detail and reflect all the brilliance and subtle hues of these native Americans, including the new generation of ITOH's.

\* *A.P. Saunders, William Gratwick, Nassos Daphnis,  
David Reath, Toichi Domoto,  
Don Hollingsworth and Roger Anderson*

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**AMERICAN PEONY SOCIETY**  
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## AMERICAN PEONY SOCIETY

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### DEPT. OF REGISTRATION

The department was formed to properly supervise the nomenclature of the different varieties and kinds of peonies. All new varieties should be registered to avoid duplication of names.

Greta M. Kessenich, Secretary

### OBJECTIVES

The Articles of Incorporation state: Section (2) That the particular objects for which the corporation is to be formed are as follows: To increase the general interest in the cultivation and use of the Peony; to improve the methods of its cultivation and methods of placing it upon the market; to increase its use as a decorative flower; to bring about a more thorough understanding between those interested in its culture; to properly supervise the nomenclature of the different varieties and kinds of peonies; to stimulate the growing and introduction of improved seedlings and crosses of such flower; and to promote any kind of the general objects herein specified by holding or causing to be held exhibitions, and awarding or causing or procuring to be awarded, prizes therefor or in any other manner.

The AMERICAN PEONY SOCIETY BULLETIN is the official Society publication. It is mailed postpaid quarterly to all members in good standing.

### MEMBERSHIP

The By-Laws state: All reputable persons, professional or amateur, who are interested in the Peony; its propagation, culture, sale and development are eligible for membership. Dues are as follows:

Single Annual.....	\$ 7.50	Junior or member family.....	\$ 2.50
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Contributing.....	\$25.00	Supporting.....	\$100.00
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# AMERICAN Peony Society Bulletin



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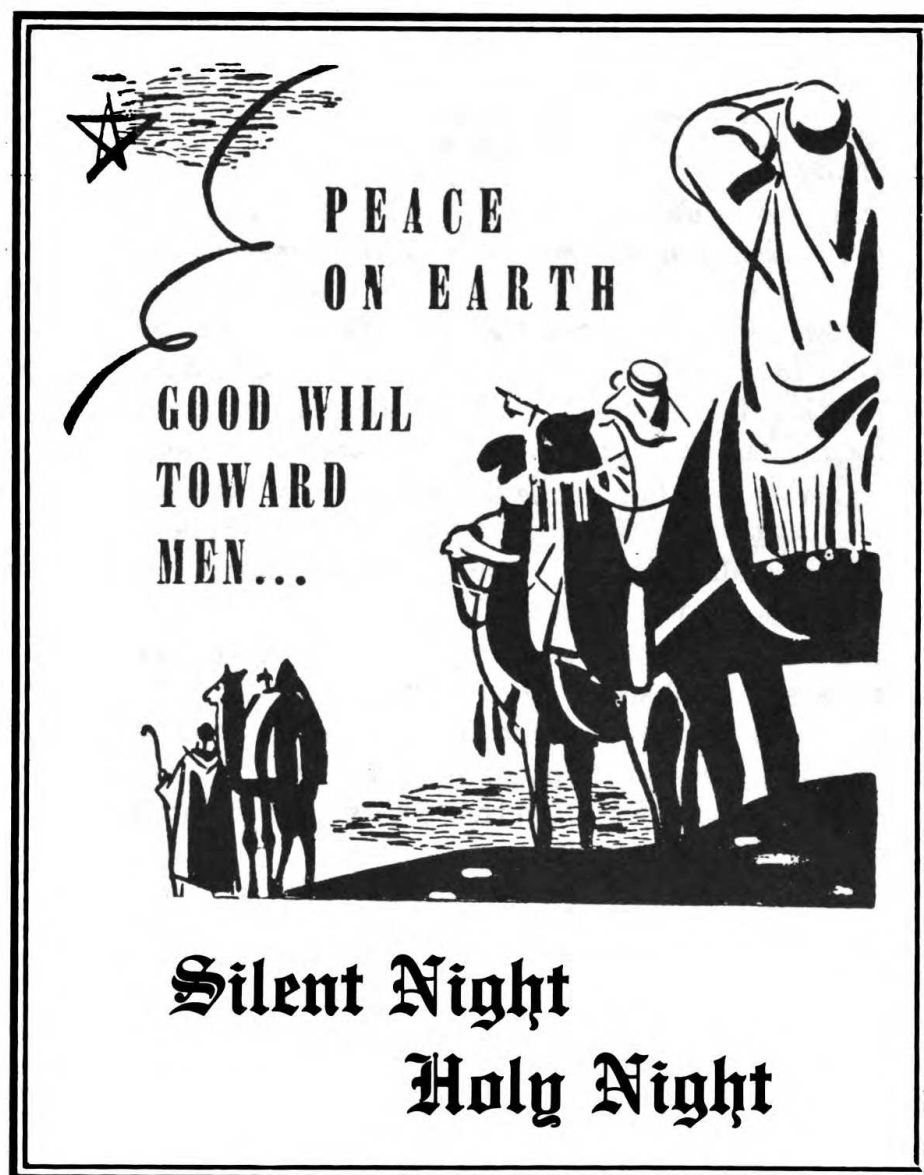
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# FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

As this year draws to a close, I want to add my own Holiday Greetings to those you will receive from the American Peony Society and the Board of Directors. Remember the Society as you select presents now and throughout the year for your gardening friends! Membership in the Society is an inexpensive gift that lasts a full twelve months. The wonderful new tree peony book, and the other publications of our Society, are also excellent gift ideas.

Fall is certainly a busy time for the gardener. Once again, I have found more peony varieties I want to add to my collection. (I don't know where this all ends, but sometime this winter I will at least try and count up the varieties I grow.)

Having heard of others' successes, for the first time this year I decided to do some fall spraying with "Roundup" to reduce the perennial weeds that are growing around some of my peonies. After cutting the plants to the ground in September, I arranged for the spraying of a large field of peonies. After I see the results next spring, I'll report on the methods and the outcome.



Kent Crossley

# A VISIT WITH ROGER ANDERSON

*By Kent Crossley*

The Society Secretary, Greta Kessenich, and I, drove to the June meeting and Show in Chicago. The route, I found, goes rather near Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin. That is the home of Roger Anderson and his interesting new Itoh hybrids.

The directions we had to his home were better than our ability to follow them. We pulled into a farmyard where several families were gathered. After some discussion it was concluded that we were looking for the man "with all the flowers." He lived only a mile or so away.

As many of us know, Roger has a lactiflora peony named "Martha W," that serves as an excellent seed parent for the Itoh cross. He has hybridized a number of excellent Itohs in yellow and a variety of other colors. We saw "Bartzella"—a very floriferous yellow—and many other seedlings. What a wonderful addition to the peonies that are being developed by American hybridists!



*P. Martha W. showing the number of peony crosses made by Roger on the three plants.*

Be sure to plan on attending our 1989 show, for we will be visiting Roger and his wife, and seeing their flowers next June.

## PAEONIA ROYALTY

*By Tom Gentry, Lexington, Virginia*

If the Japanese tree peony is indeed the king of flowers, as I firmly believe, the lutea and delavayi hybrids are surely the crown princes. In color range and blends, beauty and variety of foliage, fragrance, sturdiness of plant, and ability to stand up to full sun without wilting, these Saunders and Daphnis hybrids are the most exciting plants I know. I now have more than fifty of them and am always looking to have more. However, there are problems. Sources are limited, prices are understandably high, and many varieties are unobtainable.

Sometimes mis-labeling is a problem, and it takes considerable effort to identify. Often plants do not bloom for two or three years after

planting, and then to be confronted with an unidentifiable variety can be frustrating.

Beyond these basic concerns, there is only fragmentary information to be had about blooming season, growth habit, form, size, and presentation of bloom, floriferousness, duration of flowering, and sensitivity to sun and heat. One learns primarily by observation. I thought it might be valuable, therefore, to record my experience with these plants, always keeping in mind that plants, soils, and exposure vary widely and my conclusions must remain tentative.

Let me begin by listing my plants according to blooming season. Early bloomers for me begin about April 25, midseason about May 10, and late varieties about May 20.

Early	Midseason	Late
High Noon	Vesuvian	Angelet
Silver Sails	Golden Isles	Spring Carnival
Golden Bowl	Hesperus	Tiger, Tiger
Corsair	Infanta	Regent
Gauguin	Mystery	Summer Night
Mme. Henry	Savage Splendor	Gold Sovereign
	Apricot	Right Royal
	Red Cloud	Roman Gold
	Narcissus	Rose Flame
	Daffodil	Marchioness
	Thunderbolt	Banquet
	Coronal	Golden Hind
	Princess	Damask
	Black Pirate	Redon
	Canary	Alice Harding
	Renown	Chromatella
	Harvest	
	Chinese Dragon	
	Amber Moon	Unbloomed
	Kronos	
	Marie Laurencin	Zephyrus
	Themis	Iphigenia
	Tria	Hestia
	Icarus	Leda
	Arethusa	Ariadne
	Demetra	

The first lutea to bloom—actually, for me, almost the first tree peony of any kind to bloom—is Corsair. It is a very stoleniferous variety and makes a rather low, sprawling plant, but the deep color is excellent and, from a short distance, the blooms have a remarkable inner fire. It opens a few buds at a time and thus lasts late into the season. Gauguin is a striking color combination and blooms freely, although one could wish the blooms lasted a bit longer and that the plant was more compact. Golden Bowl makes a perfect mound, rather low, but

covered with blooms. The individual flowers are not so spectacular as other yellows, but the general effect is lovely. My favorite yellow is **High Noon**. It makes a very large plant, the color is like lemon sherbet, the presentation of the flowers is perfect, and the fragrance is delightful. There is no finer peony. **Silver Sails** is another fine yellow, more airy and delicate, which makes a nice contrast with **High Noon**. **Mme. Henry** is not a particularly graceful plant, but it blooms well and the color is striking.

Midseason brings the largest number of fine varieties. My own personal favorites are **Mystery** and **Princess**. The color of the former is usually described as pearly lavender, but the effect from a short distance is a flesh pink with deep red flares. The flowers are large and there are lots of them, well presented. **Princess** is sometimes described as mauve, but for me it is the nearest to a true pink in the luteas. The red flares increase the effect. **Themis** is very similar in color, but lacks the flares (despite what the catalogs say). I particularly like the spiky foliage of **Themis**, and the long blooming period is another plus. **Vesuvian** rather hides its flowers in the lush foliage, but the plant is so regularly formed and the foliage so lovely that it is a showpiece in or out of bloom. For a dark red, however, I prefer **Black Pirate** or **Thunderbolt**, both beautiful plants and flowers. Among the intense yellows it would be hard to beat **Canary** and **Golden Isles**. The latter is a bit sparing in its blooms, but each is gorgeous and, for me, much more double than catalog pictures. **Tria** and **Amber Moon** both perform admirably in a softer shade, but the outstanding yellow in this group is **Demetra**. I never see this variety offered, and indeed I got mine as a mis-labeled **Gauguin**. I think I have it identified correctly, however. It makes a tall bush that fountains out luxuriously at the top. It is extremely floriferous, the early blooms a very double yellow shaded bright red, the later ones more single. The fragrance is delicious. **Narcissus** is a big, rather ungainly plant, but its pure light yellow single blooms are charming. (It is my wife's favorite.) Smaller, but even more graceful, is the double form, **Daffodil**. **Harvest** is a unique tawny yellow, although my plant is not vigorous and provides few flowers. **Coronal** is a rather delicate plant with me. I recognize the beauty of the flower without really loving it. (I don't much like the **Peace** rose either.) **Hesperus** and **Renown** are wonderful plants and flowers, virtually flawless. They are much more distinct than the catalogs would have one believe. I wouldn't be without either. I am less enthusiastic about **Chinese Dragon** and **Marie Laurencin**. Both have too much mauve in them to be really good reds. **Chinese Dragon** does have nice, ferny foliage. **Savage Splendor** is a remarkable blend of colors, almost gaudy, but my plant is not very vigorous and did not even bloom this year. Two very disappointing plants for me are **Apricot** and **Red Cloud**. **Apricot** has small, rather washed-out blooms, though the effect from a distance is pleasant. **Red Cloud** has small droopy flowers, dull in color. The plant seems healthy, but the blooms look sickly. **Infanta** is a curious plant. I have had it for six or seven

years. It is still small and has bloomed only once. Its white and purple flower is unlike anything else, and its deep red foliage makes for a striking contrast. **Kronos** is a huge, gorgeous bloom of a wonderful black red. One could wish its blooms would face upward a bit more. Two new **Daphnis** plants complete the midseason list, **Icarus** and **Arethusa**. The former is a splendid bright red. **Arethusa** is billed as a clear light pink, but my plant's flowers are lavender with deep purple flares—not unlike the Japanese tree peony, **Guardian of the Monastery**.

The late bloomers include some fine flowers too. **Angelet** (another mis-labeled plant that I hope I have identified correctly) makes a lovely show as its graceful fluted yellow blossoms cover the bush. **Roman Gold** has made a wide handsome plant (though rather low), but conceals nearly all its flowers beneath the foliage. **Spring Carnival** is a large handsome flower, but tends to put up only one or two shoots and never makes a bush. **Golden Hind** is a very large floppy bloom and a leggy plant. I like it less than the more intense yellows. **Golden Sovereign** is a huge plant and getting larger. I even have to cut it back from time to time. In its early years, the blooms never opened properly and were knotty and distorted. This year they were fine, although relatively small. **Regent** is my one lutea that is extremely sensitive to sun. It wilts at the first ray. Shaded with a canopy, it has quite nice blood orange flowers. **Damask** has much the same color as **Harvest**, but the plant is sprawling and the blooms are heavy and bend downwards.

**Summer Night** and **Tiger, Tiger** are a problem. My plants are, to all appearances, identical. I must have two **Summer Nights** or two **Tiger, Tigers**, but which? In any event, though the color is nice, the blooms are tucked away in surrounding foliage and make little effect. The plants themselves are extremely robust. **Marchioness** is surely one of the loveliest of color combinations and the plant is a heavy bloomer, but the individual flowers are disappointingly small. **Banquet**, on the other hand, while a gorgeous red, is very large and rather floppy. It seldom makes a good impression on the bush, although individual blooms can be spectacular. **Alice Harding** and **Chromatella** are older varieties, of course, with notorious faults, but I find them worth having. **Chromatella** is a gorgeous bloom, even dangling from its weak stem. **Alice Harding** is far stronger. Indeed, I think it holds its flowers much better than the books indicate, and for a clear, pure, intense yellow it would be hard to beat.

**Rose Flame** is a unique smoky pink with interesting cut foliage. I am very fond of it, but have had a bad time establishing it, having lost two plants before the current one. At least it holds its flowers much better than the books indicate. **Right Royal** and **Redon** end the parade. **Right Royal** is a lovely sprightly blossom, but it does not last well. I have saved **Redon** for the last, not only because it gives blooms long after everything else is gone, but because in size, in beauty, and in



uniqueness of color it is unsurpassed. The catalogs which describe it as having two distinct colors of flower are quite correct. One is a soft apricot, the other a rich lavender pink. I do not know a lovelier blossom.

Finally, I have several plants that have not yet bloomed: Zephyrus, Iphigenia, Hestia, Leda, and Ariadne.

Again, despite problems, I reaffirm my pleasure in these marvelous collaborations between man and nature. Few thrills equal the successive openings of the myriad colors and forms of these spectacular plants, and from the first bloom of Corsair to the last bloom of Redon is a full five weeks. Those weeks are worth waiting for.

## TREE PEONIES IN THE NORTH

*by Anthony De Blasi*

Until the "Greenhouse Effect" warms Maine by ten degrees or so—in perhaps 50 years, if the theory holds—my adopted state will remain largely out of the ideal zone for tree peonies.

While I look back with nostalgia at their New York incarnation, characterized by a full development of height and breadth, I console myself that here in southwest Maine (on the border of Climate Zones 4 and 5) my tree peonies enjoy robust growth and strong color. But these plants do not, as a rule, attain the height and breadth they do south of Zone 5.

My tallest plants are those tucked near the south side of the house, where they escape the full blast of winter. Those "in the field" get trimmed to the snow line, which varies from about two feet down to zero. Exposed stems do not survive subzero temperatures. The net effect of this constant wearing down of the tops reminds me of the natural dwarfing of trees above the timber line of a mountain.

With artificial protection, as with roses (I think of wooden frames filled with straw, and similar schemes), there is no reason why tree peonies could not be grown to perfection, north of Zone 5. This does put the damper on a large collection, in an open setting. In a cold climate it is best to plant a collection of tree peonies along a south-facing wall, preferably with a windbreak behind it. This is not necessary with herbaceous peonies, since they naturally shed their tops before the snow flies.

While a thick blanket of snow is an excellent insulator, its weight may crush stems. Plants staked against the wind are all set, but unbraced tall and critical stems should be tied to firm supports or the whole plant protected with a wooden frame.

Whether pampered, or allowed to go wild, tree peonies will survive extremes of weather, too little care, or too much care, and will renew themselves from their perennial roots if need be to overcome stem losses. What they will not forgive, in any climate, is constant transplanting and competition with weeds and other plants.

# TWENTIETH CENTURY GARDENS

*By Verna C. Garvan, Hot Springs, Arkansas*

Twentieth Century Gardens is a woodland garden. It is being developed on approximately 200 acres of unspoiled forest in the main channel of beautiful Lake Hamilton, Hot Springs, Arkansas.

It was formidable when I first saw it—a jungle of towering trees and understory well mixed with briars. There were no roads or even trails. But I was enchanted with its beauty, and determined to preserve it.

Going by the natural lay of the land, wide paths up to thirty feet were set out. Trees were thinned, cutting only lesser trees. Brush was cleared and returned to the land, using an Asplundt chipper. Briars were killed. It was difficult to decide what and how much to remove, retaining as much of the natural beauty as possible. Almost landscaping in reverse!

There are pines, white oak, red oak, willow oak, Arkansas oak, elm, hickory, thousands of dogwood, many varieties of hawthorn, black gum, sweet gum, maple, sumac, beauty berry, wild flowers and ferns. I have added sugar maple, magnolia grandiflora, magnolia virginiana, several varieties magnolia soulangiana, and hybrids including the yellow Brooklyn Botanic Garren's Elizabeth, sourwood, cypress in the edge of the water, tulip tree, and other special trees.

This is mostly a shady garden. Paths have been lined with azaleas and companion plants. There is a Camellia Walk through the woods—a Daffodil Hill, and a Border of Old Roses where some trees were cleared for adequate sun.

Always I was looking for interesting, natural spots to develop with appropriate planting, and for a place to plant TREE PEONIES—then I found a hillside running east and west. Just enough trees were cut, and here I have planted a grove of Japanese maples bordered next to the walk downhill with tree peonies. The light on this hillside is wonderful, changing constantly all day. The peonies and Japanese Maples are protected from the withering west sun by the filtered light of the few trees.

Holes were dug two feet deep and two feet wide. We have much rock beneath the surface. A soil mix was made of 6 parts (a "part" being a shovel) good soil: 1 part peat moss; 1 part wood ashes; 1/2 pound coffee can bonemeal (well mixed in a wheelbarrow). After blooming, each plant is circled with bonemeal, wood ashes, 13-13-13, and cow manure (well rooted). So far, there are no diseases.

Hot Springs is in Zone 7 bordering on Zone 8. We can be very hot and dry in the summer with temperatures up to 115 degrees, official. Heaven knows what it is in the sun. We have some snow and ice in the winter, but I have never seen the ground frozen deeper than two inch-

es, and that lasts only a day or two. We have early crocus, daffodils, forsythia, etc. from mid-February on. We have a mile-and-a-half of water lines and pumps on the lake. The lake water has no chemicals and some natural fertilizer. We have to water the azaleas and other plants we have planted. While the peonies do not seem to suffer from the heat as the azaleas do, they are most grateful for the water by growing very well.

Tree peonies start to bloom here in mid-April and continue for some time. Other peonies grow well here too, and we have some herbaceous hybrids including the exquisite Cytherea, in another area of the garden.

We started the planting of tree peonies in 1984. So far I have: **KAMATA-FUGI, SHINTENCHI, MYSTERY, HANA KISOI, GOLDEN HIND, ARTEMIS, PRINCESS, HIGH NOON, BANQUET, GAUGIN**, and a beautiful lavender that was mis-named **HANA KISOI** by the first nursery I purchased from, so I don't know what it is. This year I am adding **LEDA, ZEPHYRUS, ALHAMBRA, YAE ZAKURA**, and **GUARDIAN OF THE MONASTERY**, and we will be adding more.

In 1985, I gave Twentieth Century Gardens to the Program in Landscape Architecture at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas, in perpetuity. It is so named because it is being preserved and developed in the twentieth century, and so much has been destroyed in this century.

It is planned for the garden to be open to the public in supervised tours only. The entrance is into a deep, natural ravine from the lake. We are not quite ready for opening the garden. I want to build a pavilion before opening, but we have groups asking to visit, and I take people out often. The Arkansas chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects is meeting in Hot Springs next week and is coming to the garden as one of their events.

## REFLECTIONS ON PEONY VARIETIES

*By Joe Glocka, West Allis, Wisconsin*

As we approach the grim days of winter here in the upper Midwest, it's comforting to reflect on the past performance of peonies in our gardens.

The severe drought this past summer was exceptionally hard on field grown peonies where watering was out of the question. One-year-old roots suffered the hardest. Many dried up by mid-July. But, there is always the hope that peonies, being the hardy plants that they are, will respond to full vigor this coming year.

For the moment, however, here is an evaluation of some of the lac-tifloras (non-hybrid) in our gardens, which are perennial A-1 "repeat performers." I might add, too, that they account for many blue rib-

bons won at national and regional peony shows.

### WHITES AND BLUSH

**AVE MARIA:** A most noble white with hints of red flecks throughout the blooms. Mid-season.

**NORMA VOLZ:** A comparative newcomer that has become a traditional standby among the whites for huge blooms, fragrance and early blooming. Full double.

**ANN COUSINS:** Jumbo white except that it often blooms too late for show use.

**FESTIVA MAXIMA:** A profuse white double with a peppermint candy overcast because of extensive red streaking.

**MARILLA BEAUTY:** Right near the top, one of the best white doubles for stamina, fragrance and seasonal consistency.

**MOONSTONE:** Handsome blush white to pinkish double with perfectly symmetrical petal formation.

**VICTORY:** A splendid late white double that blooms late in June and sometimes into the first couple of days in July following a cool spring season.

**NICK SHAYLOR:** Regarded as light pink, but it's more blush white in our garden. Perfect formation, huge blooms.

**MISS AMERICA:** Wow! What a superb semi-double white. Always spectacular with huge blooms, striking stamens—the best!

**MINNIE SHAYLOR:** Another great white semi-double with showy red stigmas. Always a blue ribbon winner. Many times in the Court of Honor, and even a Grand Champion.

**ELSA SASS:** A beautiful pure white double of rather low stature, and with exquisite rose petaled formation.

**SNOW MOUNTAIN:** All gardens need a bomb type white. This is it!

### RED LACTIFLORAS

Red varieties among the lactis are fewer in number than the white. Most of the reds we have appear as hybrids. Non-hybrid reds regarded as annual favorites include:

**PRESIDENT LINCOLN:** So well named! It is an exceptionally tall, red single with profuse blooms and bearer of viable seeds.

**KANSAS:** Perhaps the most favorite among the red doubles. Stems are like bamboo poles that survive the severest storms.

**IMPERIAL RED:** A tall, dark red single; very tall, very brilliant.

**PHILIPPE REVOIRE:** Outstanding red double with generally small blooms which make it ideal for floral arrangements.

**MABEL GORE:** Dark red double with huge, full double blooms, mid-season, prolific!

**RUTH CLAY:** A very dark red double—a good cut flower and very floriferous.

**LAURA DEXHEIMER:** A rather early full double red with cup-

shaped blooms. Not very fragrant.

**RED GODDESS:** Dark red semi-double with golden stamens. Mid-season.

**ARCTURUS:** A dark red single with petals bearing a glossy sheen. Unusual.

### **JAPANESE**

Every garden should have a selection of JAPANESE to offer a contrast to the bloom formations of the general run of lactis. They are most striking in appearance, and generally have a longer bloom life on plants. Excellent for arrangements and as cut flowers. The following are great "repeat performers:"

**LARGO:** A most elegant variety with pink blooms, yellow staminodes and pink tipped carpels.

**FAIR ELAINE:** A tall pink single with profuse blooms, generally positioned well above the foliage.

**HARI AI NIN:** A deep maroon red in overall bloom appearance with gold tipped staminodes. Stunning as a single plant; overwhelming in a row.

**RED SPLENDOR:** A very distinctive red Jap, profuse bloomer, huge plant of exceptional vigor.

**BREAK O'DAY:** A dark pink Jap with a red cushion of stamens, very hardy and most unusual in appearance.

**PRAIRIE AFIRE:** Pink with red staminodes, very hardy. A row in bloom gives the appearance of plants on fire, especially at dusk.

**WHITE CAP:** A most unusual deep pink Jap bordering on the maroon with whitish petaloids creating an outstanding contrast. A crowd-stopper at arboretums.

**WESTERNER:** A most outstanding medium pink Jap with a center of bright red staminodes. Large blooms; consistently perfect and true to variety.

**TORO-NO-MAKI:** Handsome white of medium height with a center ball of white staminodes bearing yellow tips.

**AMA-NO-SODE:** Pink Jap with huge blooms. Large center of yellow tipped staminodes. Very vigorous in annual performance.

**WHITE GOLD:** Exceptionally tall white Jap with deep yellow tipped staminodes. Very weather-worthy, very floriferous.

The above presents but a few of our favored varieties. There remain the light and dark pinks among the lactis as well as the whole world of the herbaceous hybrids with tree peonies being another story. All in all it's delightful to let the mind hopscotch around the varieties and momentarily dwell on the merits of each . . . a good mental exercise when the fields are bleak and laced with snow.

**If you cut a tree, plant a tree.**

**It is nature's replaceable energy.**

## PEONY SEED FOR DISTRIBUTION

*Write: Chris Laning, 553 West F. Avenue, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007*

This year has been the most trying, with drought and now rain, that I can remember even though the peonies survived beautifully and the seed crop was excellent. —Chris Laning

**From L. J. Dewey, Richmond, Virginia**

Dear Chris,

I am sending along some tree peony seed for the seed distribution program. All of the seed came from open pollinated flowers and most were harvested from Japanese TP varieties except for the batch from Red Dynasty, which is supposed to be a Smirnow import from mainland China, and the batch of *P. spontanea* seeds.

The seeds are listed below with the number of seeds in parenthesis.

Mixture of seed from unknown *P. suffruticosa* varieties (112) (tree peony)

*P. spontanea* (19)

Hinode Sekai (red), (21)

Hodai (rose red), (13)

Kamada Nishiki (purple), (20)

Kokko No Tsukasa (maroon), (7)

Red Dynasty (77)

Rimpo (purple), (10)

Shima Daijin (purple), (5)

Taiyo (red), (7)

*P. suffruticosa* unknown medium red variety, (35) (tree peony)

*P. suffruticosa* unknown white variety, (22) (tree peony)

Yachiyo Tsubaki (pink), (17)

**From Al Rogers, Caprice Farm Nursery, Sherwood, Oregon**

Suffruticosa seed - Tree Peony

Peregrina seed

**From Robert J. Geller, Fremont, Ohio**

Random collection of seeds from open pollination of specie hybrid seedlings and lactiflora seedlings

**From Marion De Reamer, Merrillville, Indiana**

Mixed Japanese seedlings from Japanese form of seedlings mostly from

Gay Paree, Lotus Queen, Kate Barry, Bu-te, and Westerner

Mixed Japanese from White Cap, Gay Paree, Roberta, (few) Bu-te, Westerner, some Madame Butterfly, Do Tell, and Lotus Queen

**More seeds available for distribution**

Lactiflora—from select plants

Hybrids—advanced generation tetraploids

Suffruticosa—tree peony

Peony seed mix

Thanks to all the donors of the above peony seed.—CHRIS

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## REGISTRATIONS

**VIOLET DAWSON** (Roy Klehm) June 15, 1988

Seedling #110H. Japanese lactiflora. Parentage, line bred **Bowl of Cream** (F3). First bloomed 1968.

Ivory and Gold, a well-structured, large flowering Japanese style blossomed bush. Occasional petal tufts emerge from the flower center which matches the ivory guard petals.

A flat form, good substance, fragrant, seeds, no stamen or pollen, very good stem strength, 30" in height, very lush dark green foliage, early bloom. Reliability, excellent.

**GERRY** (Roy G. Klehm) Sept. 27, 1988

Seedling number unknown. Rose red double hybrid. Well structured bomb with good substance. Very good stem strength which holds 6" bloom, 32 inches in height. The plant is vigorous with dark green foliage; the flower is fragrant and blooms in early-mid-season.

Named after Geraldine Smith, devoted employee for 40 years working with peonies. She keeps all the varieties straight. Her husband is Edward Smith, made famous by "Mr. Ed." peony.

**SUGAR N' SPICE** (Al Rogers, Sherwood, Oregon) Sept. 2, 1988

Seedling #.83-3, single hybrid. First year bloomed was 1981.

Creamy pink hybrid with cupped form. It has pollen, seeds, good substance and most reliable. Early, excellent stem strength, 24" in height with dark green heavy textured foliage.

The flower is fluted and lightly ruffled. The flower is the color of peppermint candy and sets on top of the foliage. It is unaffected by the weather, always standing upright and seems to highly resistant to botrytis.

**KISHU CAPRICE** (Arthur O. Sasaki, Tualatin, Oregon) Sept. 2, 1988

Tree peony with unknown suffructicosa. First bloomed 1939.

Silvery rose double ball, good substance with heavy amount of bloom. Has stamens and pollen, excellent stem strength, very very early and grows to 5' in height. Large leaves of medium green. This plant is in bloom by the second or third week in April here in Oregon.

The seedling was brought from Kishu prefecture Japan as an unbloomed seedling. Permission has been given Caprice Nursery to name this plant **Kishu Caprice** and to propagate, introduce, and sell it through their catalog. Permission granted by Arthur O. and Mrs. Sasaki, Tualatin, Oregon.

Registered by Allan and Dot Rogers, Sherwood, Oregon



***Minnesota Exhibition — arrangements of Myra MacRae, top, and Barrington Belle, inset.***



*Arrangements of Gay Paree, Etched Salmon, Coral Charm*

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# TWENTY-FIVE FAVORITE PEONIES

By D. Steve Varner, Monticello, Illinois

The data is not listed as to height but **PICOTEE** is low, 18-20 inches, and **ELIZA LUNDY** is about 24 inches; others are 32-36 inches. **OLD FAITHFUL** is about 46 inches. **CLOUD BURST** of the Falks is new, not introduced and is not grown here.

I will code my reasons for selection: Breeding "B", Color "C", Double "D", Semi double "SD", Single "S", Exceptionally strong stems "ST", Clump value "CV", and Jap "J." All peonies listed perform good here, and are not necessarily in order of preference.

	B	D	ST	CV	C color	
Sunny Boy	*	*	*	*	cream	very potent pollen, flat form
America	*	SD	*	*	red	best carrying power of all the reds to date
Red Charm	*	D	*	*	red	will set seed sparingly
Old Faithful	*	D	**	*	red	large flower
Avis Warner		D	*	*	red	
Cytheria		SD	*	*		new plants from root cuttings, luminous
Moonrise	*	S	*		cream	
Cloud Burst		D	**	*	off white	large flower, very double
Eliza Lundy		D	*	*	red	very floriferous, symmetrical clump
Color Charm		SD	*	*	coral	
Apache		S	**	*	bright red	Color!
Prairie Afire		J				fragrance
Bess Bockstoe		D		*	pink	becomes two tone pink as flowers age
Illini Belle		D		*	red	
Kamada Fuji	*	D	**	*	deep red purple	easy pod parent, vigorous, large flower—tree
Gauguin		SD	*	*	blend	exotic combination of colors—tree
Hephestos		SD	*	*	deep red	large flower—tree
Picotee		S			pearled white	with edge of raspberry fuschia
Mons Jules Elie		D			pink	fragrant, good cut flower
Gay Paree		J		*	rose pink/white	
Cora Stubbs		J			rose pink/white	
Mothers Choice		D		*	white	large flower
Mary Jo LeGare		D			hot pink red	cut flower
Salmon Glow		S			pink	
Rivida	*	S	*		red with violet	multibudded, easy parent, mostly double seedlings, some Japanese

# **PRETTY PETALS FARM**

## **Champaign, Illinois—Klehm Nursery**

*By Beatrice Pavia*

She is 61 years old and her greatest pleasure is walking up and down a hundred acres, wearing insulated coveralls in the damp spring and going bareheaded in the hot summer sun. She has more than 800 varieties of peonies and daylilies classified in her head, and she can spot a "rogue," or wrongly identified one, at a glance. While walking, she also notes the blooms, checks stakes and counts plants for inventory. She walks all day, for weeks at a time, taking few breaks.

It's called "roguing," and Geraldine Smith, with her flower files in her head, is the best in the nation at it.

The farm lies two miles northwest of Champaign, Illinois, on county highway 900E, nestled between other farm fields and an interstate. Workers tend its 100 acres almost solely by hand, yet you can see few weeds along its brilliant rows. Like the cash crops of corn and soybeans that surround it, this farm also ships its yield to markets around the world, but its products soothe the souls rather than fill the bellies of its buyers. The big moneymakers on Pretty Petals Farm are not foodstuffs, but peonies, daylilies, iris and hosta.

Pretty Petals Farm's business is to grow flowers for its parent organization, Klehm Nursery, Charles Klehm & Son, the largest nationwide dealer in peonies and daylilies, and one of the largest in hosta. The nursery has been based in South Barrington, Illinois, since 1984, with several feeder farms in South Barrington, Champaign, and other Illinois areas. It has been headquartered in the Chicago area for over a hundred years.

The Champaign branch was added in 1973 and propagates the various flowers, many of which have been hybridized by Roy Klehm at the nursery's South Barrington location. The Champaign farm also grows shade and sun perennials in its greenhouses.

A family operation spanning four generations, the nursery started 135 years ago with John Klehm, a German immigrant who came to the Arlington Heights area in 1852. He originally focused on growing fruit trees, raspberries and Christmas trees. By the 1890s, the nursery had branched out into growing elms; the Klehms dispatched 70 horse-and-buggy teams to deliver the trees all over Chicagoland. Klehm Nursery was the first in the United States to bud elm trees vegetatively, cloning them so that an avenue of arching elms would all look the same.

Peonies became part of the Klehm's business with John's son, Charles, who joined in the rage for peonies that swept the nation in the 1890s. Among the rush of peony growers that sprouted up at that time, the Klehms guarded against "industrial espionage" so carefully that their peonies were planted and labeled by number, not by name.

That way Klehm employees couldn't divulge secrets to competitors. The rapid expansion of growers (and peonies) resulted in such confusion that the American Peony Society, of which Charles was a charter member, was born to keep track of the varieties and hybrids in a registry.

Charles passed the nursery on to his eighth child and only son, Carl (the two men referred to in the "Charles & Son" in the nursery's name). In addition to following in his father's footsteps, Carl started another Klehm tradition: graduating in floriculture and ornamental horticulture from the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. He did so in 1938 and has been followed by sons Arnold, Roy, and Carl, Jr., and grandson Kit Carl Klehm, a sophomore in the same curriculum.

"The Klehms are different," pointed out Greta Kessenich, secretary/treasurer of the American Peony Society. "The boys take over and their kids go right in working with them . . . They're a closely knit family."

"I started out at the nursery in the sixth grade for a quarter an hour," admitted Roy Klehm, who has inherited the reins of the business from his father, Carl. He remembered being a ten-year-old who had just been told he would be in charge of choosing, picking, labeling and displaying the nursery's flowers at the National Peony Show that year in Dixon. With a ten-year-old at the helm, "we probably flopped at the show, but my father won his son over to horticulture."

When he was 14, he was responsible for choosing peonies the family patented. By the time he was 16 or 17, he knew better than his father the secret code numbers established for the peonies.

The long-term interest in flowers has inspired not only several generations of Klehms, but also their employees. "It's like a family here," said Judith Clapper, head of retail operations in Champaign. A friendly woman with a dimple in her chin, an easy smile and startling pink and green shoelaces, she confessed: "I came to work here for a couple of weeks and stayed 15 years. I really love the flowers . . . and the people I work with."

Geraldine Smith and her husband, Ed, have been with the nursery for more than 40 years. They began working at the Klehm's farm in Noble, Illinois, in 1946. "Everyone thought the Klehms were crazy," mused Geraldine about the nursery's purchase of the farm in 1939. "How were they going to make money from flowers?"

"Today," Clapper said, "we're the largest farm of this kind in the United States. We have over 400 varieties of peonies," the largest amount grown on a farm in the nation. Klehm Nursery sells its mostly mail-order products to nurseries, cataloguers and private buyers in this country. The nursery also conducts a brisk international trade, having sold its plants to Holland, England, Germany, Czechoslovakia,



Italy, Switzerland, New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Colombia and even to the botanical gardens in Moscow.

"You can't mention any place in the world with peonies that doesn't have Klehm peonies," noted Kessenich. "They have so many varieties and they take care of them."

Only about one percent of the nursery's dollar sales includes "pickin' peonies," or cut flowers. Most of the sales involve the roots of plants, which are cut up into "eyes" to sell to retailers or wholesalers. As machines only cultivate the soil and plant daylilies, employees painstakingly hand plant, dig, wash, cut and pack plants and roots.

Despite the small percentage of cut flower sales pickin' time is hectic. Peonies and iris peak from mid-May through mid-June, with daylilies at their height in mid-July. A wagonload of cut flowers comes every ten minutes to one of the outbuildings that houses a 30x60-foot refrigerated room. The stems are laid row on row on the floor of the chilled room, eventually covering it from wall to wall and stacking three to four feet high.

"Flowers have to be ready at the right time for the Chicago market," said Clapper. That "right time" means about the end of May, when cut flowers are in high demand for weddings, graduations and Memorial Day grave decorations. Roy pointed out the value of the nursery's more southerly farms in readying fresh flowers for market: for every 17 miles you go south, peonies bloom one day earlier. Smith added that peonies can be refrigerated dry (not in water) for up to three weeks, as their stems automatically seal in ten minutes when cut. Before putting them in a vase, you must recut the stems.

Before the Klehms reduced the amount of cut flowers they raised, Geraldine and Ed worked the "pickin' peony" farm in Noble. Geraldine recalled overflowing a refrigerator train car ten times with the fresh-cut flowers, with her highest year producing a dazzling 45,000 dozen peonies (15,000 dozen over her average yield). "We had ten women working a solid week," she smiled in remembrance. "We could work 18-hour days in season."

"The itch grows on you," said Roy, 44, of his lifelong involvement with horticulture and hybridizing. "I like to think I'm doing something no one else is doing; maybe I'll be remembered 50 years from now." He credited his mother, Lois, who has 3,000 peony plants in her private garden, with keeping the peony business going. "She'd never let us quit," he acknowledged. "Of all the Klehms, she probably loves peonies the most."

"It gets in your blood," says Geraldine of a lifetime devoted to flowers. She considers herself lucky to be in charge of roguing "because I get to enjoy the flowers; you have to do the roguing when they're in bloom."

"She's the top person in the U.S. in peony identification," says

Roy of Geraldine and the prowess she has acquired. "No one can match her. She has no formal training. Her experience with flowers is all those years of loving them and studying them." But ask Geraldine, with 800 peonies and daylilies catalogued in her head, which variety is special to her, and she wavers. "Every flower has its own characteristics," she says fairly. "It's like asking, 'Which child is your favorite?'"

\* \* \* \*

**Author's Note:** Pretty Petals Farm welcomes visitors Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Saturday, 7:30 a.m. to noon. The farm staff recommends a visit during peak blooming periods (peonies, mid-May to mid-June; iris, end of May; hosta, June; and daylilies, mid-July). Guests can easily identify flowers by the fields' labeling system (no longer in secret code). Although no regularly scheduled tours are given, the farm staff is willing to accompany visitors as they view the farm.

—*Illinois Magazine*

## KOSHKONONG COLUMN

*By Carroll Spangler, Ft. Atkinson, Wisconsin*

One year ago, after 43 years of residence there, I sold my farm and moved my peonies to the other side of Koshkonong Township to the farm of my friend, Roger Anderson.

When one goes about making such a move, he gives careful consideration to what he wants. Many plants were just given away or sold locally, and many were sold to Alvin Sevold of Minnesota. Some were simply left to whatever might befall them.

'Weather to, or Weather not to' this past season has not been conducive to the establishment of young plants. The accompanying drought began in May and has lasted until mid-September with very little rainfall in-between, affecting a broad section of our country, especially in the mid-West.

Attempts to provide adequate water on such a broad scale, without an irrigation system, seemed futile. We mulched much of the garden rather heavily with hay, wood chips, etc., which proved very beneficial. It will be another year yet before a full assessment of all the drought damage to trees, shrubbery, lawns, flowers, etc. can be made.

There have been many casualties among those newly-planted roots and even some of the old established plants have not fared well because of lack of moisture. But such is fate and in spite of it all, God is good and we go right on with our plans under His direction.

In my garden, a variety has to meet a lot of qualifications in order to retain its place. We moved all that I thought would meet my requirements.

I went through row by row listing the peonies I have, or have had, in my garden, and selected 25 varieties. After making that list at ran-

dom, I found it had a good mix of peonies of different forms, colors, bloom time, Lactiflora and Hybrid, Tree Peony and Herbaceous, show flowers, cut flowers, and those for garden display. There are many good varieties to meet many requirements, and I like the following:

1. LADDIE: early hybrid, low growing, fern leaf, single of excellent red color, bears fertile seed.

2. CLEOPATRA: Lactiflora, red double, very late bloomer but dependable opener, fairly good cut flower. Thirty (30) inches tall and valuable for that late spot of color so needed in the garden. A good one!

3. BOWL OF CREAM: mid-season, Lactiflora, double white, large bloom of good form and substance, excellent show flower, good 31" garden plant.

4. SPARKLING STAR: one of the finest varieties in the garden. Early Lactiflora, single, pink color holds till last petals fall. Blooms over long period. Thirty (30) inches tall; a delight to my heart!

5. NANCY: single, hybrid, blooms early. Not the most pleasing plant habit and yet acceptable. Its peach-pink color is quite unique and its early blooms are a stand-out in the garden or in bouquets. Fertile triple hybrid both ways—28" tall.

6. DIXIE: one could list any number of good red doubles, but this is one of the very finest ones. Lactiflora, deep red, 36" tall, excellent garden plant, show flower, blooms late.

7. WHITE CAP: outstanding red, Japanese, Lactiflora, 34" tall. Excellent habit. Distinctive red guard petals with creamy white center. Looks good on the show table and in bouquets.

8. RED CHARM: red double hybrid, early. Good plant habit, deep velvety red petals of excellent substance. Everyone should have Red Charm.

9. CYTHEREA: hybrid semi-double, pink, early. One of the really outstanding varieties with coral-pink blooms, excellent cup shape, easy grower.

10. PAULA FAY: hybrid, pink semi-double, crinkled petals of good substance, pleasing plant habit; catches the eye of visitors.

11. THE MIGHTY MO: really good semi-doubles in the Lactiflora pink or red are a bit hard to come by. However, this is one of the good reds. Good plant habit, abundant bloom, pleasing flower form. Nice as a cut flower in bouquets and arrangements. Wins on the show table.

12. BU-TE: Lactiflora, white Jap. Tall growing plant of great size with abundant bloom. The flower has good cup form, heavy substance, great size, a golden center of staminodes that are different from the general run of Japs.

13. PRINCESS MARGARET: an introduction of the late Art Murawska, early to mid-season double pink, tall-growing Lactiflora of excellent flower color and form, one of the finest in the garden or cut for show.

14. PRAIRIE MOON: a hybrid from the garden of Orville Fay. A yellow flower of most pleasing form and great substance to the petals.

Thirty (30) inches tall, the plant is not of the highest in size, yet looks good in the garden.

15. MINNIE SHAYLOR: Lactiflora, white semi-double, early bloom. It has been an all-time favorite with its exquisite white petals so pleasingly arranged around an enchanting golden center, and with such heavy substance to make it last in the garden, or in an arrangement. Valuable breeder, as it is fertile both ways and produces excellent seedlings.

16. THURA HIRES: there are lots of good white doubles; however, Thura Hires has such a lovely rose form with rich white petals of heavy substance that it makes a fine flower, and fragrant in arrangements or on the show table. It blooms late and lasts well. A very handsome garden plant of medium height.

17. BURMA RUBY: bright red, single hybrid, early flowering. Plant is of medium height. A most pleasing rich red color, a cup that lasts well. Does well as a show flower.

18. NIPPON BEAUTY: red Japanese, late mid-season. Valuable because it blooms later than most Japs, and its brilliant red color. Its late bloom extends the season with a good garden display—32" tall.

19. PICO: one of the best white singles with its creamy white color and excellent substance. Its great bloom size helps on the show table. It is a strong plant of about 36" in height.

20. WALTER MAINS: red, Jap hybrid. This is clearly one of the most exquisite blooms in the garden. Rich, red color, staminodes of red-edged with gold. Large bloom of fine cup form, and lasts well on the show table; a strong plant of medium height.

21. SHINTENCHI: a Japanese tree peony with huge blooms of light pink. Semi-double ruffled petals of good texture. Outstanding early bloomer, and desirable in every way—28" tall.

22. TAIYO: Japanese tree peony with a semi-double bloom of a pleasing light brick-red color. Outstanding in appearance in the landscape.

23. CHINESE DRAGON: Saunders hybrid tree peony with semi-double blooms of crimson-mauve color, slightly crinkled with a dark red flare. Bush will grow to 3 ft. high. Finely cut foliage is distinctive of the variety; my favorite of all the Luteas.

24. GOLDEN ERA: a Reath hybrid tree peony of outstanding merit. Its golden-yellow flowers have dark red flares, semi-double of pleasing form. The bush is tall and very neat in appearance. Useful in breeding as it bears fertile seed.

25. BARTZELLA: outstanding representative of the new Itoh hybrids. Its large double yellow flowers have a lemon fragrance and grow in great profusion. They are well displayed on a neat 30" bush with very attractive foliage, a vigorous, healthy plant.

# POLLEN, PISTIL, AND POD

*Bill Seidl, 732 S. 19 St., Manitowoc, Wisconsin 54220*

**QUESTION 1:** My first attempt at germinating *lactiflora* seed was so successful that my small backyard won't hold all the plants when they reach full size. What do you recommend? Can I keep them real close and let the strongest bloom? Definitely not! Your potentially best ones will decline in vigor and die in the shadow of earlier or taller growing neighbors. An unusual dwarf or rock garden-type seedling will never get a chance to strut its stuff. To find more space, consider cutting into your lawn. I once toured a daylily breeder's garden in which a new bed was annually started in his formerly large lawn. He left grassy walkways between the beds but they, too, could be sacrificed. In my own backyard, any grass is a weed. The next choice is planting in somebody else's backyard. The ultimate step is renting or buying a city lot or parcel of farmland large enough for your needs. Before doing this, consider how you will get it plowed and tilled, how you'll get water to your plants, a structure to house your equipment, drainage and soil condition, distance from your home, and future use of the land after you are ready to give it up. If the land will make a good homesite(s), have it appropriately graded (*before* you plant or build *anything*); plant trees and shrubs to make shade, screens, and windbreaks that'll enhance the property as a homesite. A structure for your equipment could be a garage designed and located to become attached to a house or to be advantageously nearby. If you are unwilling to undertake the above, then question 2 below is one you should have posed for yourself before planting all that *lactiflora* seed.

**QUESTION 2:** What are some worthwhile breeding goals? This question requires a much more detailed response than I'm prepared to undertake here, but I'd like to consider it briefly in relation to Question 1. In the past, *lactiflora* seed has been planted literally by the bushel and grown on acres and acres of land. If you have limited space and don't want to extend yourself beyond that space, most *lactiflora* crosses are not likely to yield improvements on the best already available. Instead, consider hard-to-make crosses that yield few seeds but which are likely to push forward the frontiers of peony development. Try to obtain seeds from such reluctant seedsetters as **BURMA RUBY, RED CHARM, WHITE INNOCENCE**, the **WIND-FLOWERS, HALCYON, PRAIRIE MOON, CLAIRE DE LUNE**, or the shrubaceous (Ito) hybrids. Consider backcrossing various herbaceous hybrids to *lactiflora*, or shrub (tree) hybrids to *moutan* to obtain hybrids with higher percentages of those two species. The resulting carpelheads often look promising but are filled with mostly soft worthless seed; an occasional firm one should be valued highly. Don Hollingsworth calls such crosses the "landscape gardener's cross" because the few seedlings obtained can be dotted here and there in established bed and borders making up the home landscape. Rows of peonies in separate beds are not needed. If you are set on *lactiflora*

crosses, consider the approach used by John Richardson (1798 - 1887) and cross doubles with doubles. (See *APS - 75 Years*, pages 200-201.) Some will have small but functional carpels and some have occasional stamens interspersed among the petals. David Reath has reported good results with the use of pollen from MOTHER'S CHOICE. I once remarked to the late Peter Hughes that I'd rather have ten seeds of a rare cross than hundreds of a more common one, and he said even one seed would do. Finally, there is an important non-hybridizing area to explore, and that is the development of higher ploidy through colchicine treatments of seed or tissue of named cultivars.

**QUESTION 3: What do you recommend for winter reading?** The APS has lots of worthwhile literature and, if you are really into hybridizing, get on Chris Laning's mailing list for *Paeonia* newsletter. But the one best single source to whet your hybridizing appetite is *The Peonies*, edited by John C. Wister and copyrighted by the American Horticultural Society. It contains articles by John and Gertrude Wister, Myron Bigger, Marvin Karrels, William Krekler, George Peyton, P. P. Pirone, Silvia Saunders, and Harold Wolfe. It treats herbaceous and tree peonies in separate sections, including for each a botanical classification and description of the species. The Stern Classification on herbaceous peonies appears on pp. 17-29. Various chapters cover the histories of both sections of peonies, their culture and propagation (incl. grafting), diseases and pests, the early history of the APS, lists and descriptions of many cultivars. There is a chapter on genetics and techniques. The most thumbworn pages in my copy are 40-61, "The Works of Prof. A. P. Saunders" written by his daughter, Silvia, and pp. 90-99, "Descriptions of the Hybrid Peonies" by Silvia Saunders and William Krekler. It's the bible of peony hybridizers.

Note: Book, *THE PEONIES*, by John C. Wister, is available by writing American Peony Society, 250 Interlachen Road, Hopkins, Minnesota 55343. The price of the book is \$5.50 pp. —Editor

## LETTERS

"I am a novice trying to grow peonies, and two years out of the last three my peony bed has been devastated by fungus. To my untrained eye, I think the vandals are *Botrytis cinerea* and *Cladisporium paeoniae*. I have dispersed with pine needle mulch that I was wrongly advised to use, but too late. The people at the local Extension Service are not knowledgeable about peonies, and finally I sent samples to the University of Massachusetts for culture and advice.

"My question: from at least a couple of sources I have been advised to burn the plant stems to the ground and the area around the crown, to destroy the lingering spores. I have available a large professional plumber's torch. Should the ground be swept with this flame or moderately exposed to the flame without stopping at any area? Should I wait for cold weather and November?"

—R. L. Miller, Setucket Road, Yarmouth Port, Massachusetts 02675

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## CALL FROM THE WHITE HOUSE FOR PEONIES

Styers peonies now belong to Sandra Raker of Geneva, New York, with three farms, at Geneva, Kennett Square, Pennsylvania and Port Royal, Virginia. Sandra was an employee of ours for several years.

Sandy was called one evening last May: "This is the White House." She then sent 400 bunches of *Festiva Maxima* and *Mons Jules Elie* to a Washington airport, and they were loaded on a plane for Moscow and used in the official party for the Gorbachevs by the Reagans.

Please change my address to S122-180 N.E. Lotus Drive, Bend, Oregon 97701 and send me the new tree peony book.

Frank Styer

## CROWN JEWELS IN THE GARDEN

*By Marion DeReamer, Merrillville, Indiana*

Over the years I have frequently been asked what my favorite peony was; the usual answer is: "The one that is blooming."

Everyone has favorites, often not for logical, but sentimental, reasons. Eventually, the favorites are the ones that consistently bloom, last well, no matter what the temperature and other blooming conditions, taken into consideration.

Since we have only a few tree peonies at this time, I cannot name any favorites.

The Double Fern Leaf is always a welcome sight. It is a miniature Christmas tree with bright red ornaments at its top, signifying all the lovely gifts soon to come.

**RED CHARM** is a beautiful large red bloom and a strong plant. **SIR JOHN FRANKLIN** is a late red with slight brown tint that holds up well in the garden. **RUTH ELIZABETH** is a sentimental choice that has always performed well. It is a compact plant 24-26" tall with blooms that glow [RUTH is the first name of our first daughter: ELIZABETH, is the second name of our second daughter, hence the original choice].

White doubles include the fragrant **FESTIVA MAXIMA**, **BOWL OF CREAM** heavy white with yellow through the petals, **ELSA SASS** with beautifully rounded petals and **ANN COUSINS**, a very fragrant late double.

The bombs would be **MONS JULES ELIE**, a soft pink resembling a huge football mum; **FELIX CROUSSE**, a good red, and **EASTERN**

**STAR**, a huge white ball.

**PILLOW TALK** with its huge soft pink bloom, and **NICK SHAYLOR** with its strong stems and heavy blooms, are favorites among the pinks.

**FRIENDSHIP**, a large pink single with a silvery edge, and **WALTER MARX**, a huge white single that holds its petals nearly two weeks, are selected in the singles.

Among the Japanese blooms are **BU-TE**, a white with a yellow center that holds its bloom 8-10" above the plant; **CHARM**, red with gold tipped, red center petals; **DO-TELL**, the delicate pink with pink and red center; **MADAME BUTTERFLY**, a deep rose with self colored center petals, and **GAY PAREE** with its showy rose guard petals surrounding a creamy pink center that often fades to nearly white, and one of the taller plants in my garden.

Bringing up the rear but not the least are the semi-doubles; the early **MISS AMERICA**, white with rounded petals; the later **MINNIE SHAYLOR**, white with noticed petals; the short **CY THEREA**, with its rose pink coloring that opens up to remind me of a wild rose, and my real all-time favorite, **POSTILION**, a showy bright red with huge textured petals held on strong stems.

**CORAL CHARM** creates the most interest of all that visit the garden. It opens up a beautiful coral, but fades to a peach buff that is very intriguing.

Work continues in our wooded area, adjoining the peonies. Soon we will have the landscaping completed. Now the added area consists of two large beds of *hemerocallis*, and on in the woods are three beds of *hosta*, two rectangular and one round. A crescent-shaped bed of *caladiums* and elephant ears with *portulaca* in the center. A pansy-lined oval bed that contains grape hyacinth and *Star of Bethlehem*. A rounded mound of *hens and chix* surrounded at the moment by *coleus* with tulips in-between for spring bloom, and so our work continues. Looking forward to another year with more planting, and the bloom of the peony.

## CONSIDER THE PEONY

*by Ernest Flint Kelsey, for the Marilla Garden Club (from Bulletin #88)*

God is lighting up the garden  
When the pineys start to bloom.

So writes the "Plain Dirt Poet," whose vocation and avocation is growing this beautiful perennial. In June, it certainly does "light up the garden" with masses of bloom, some nine inches in diameter and many delightfully fragrant. This is the modern peony, developed in recent years by the painstaking work of hybridizers, and as yet not fully appreciated by garden lovers. Among these originations are huge glistening whites, some tinted ivory or cream, or bewitching blush whites in various formations, many resembling mammoth roses.

**Kelways Glorious**, admired for its form and fragrance, is a good

representative of the white company. The pinks are well represented, light and dark and intermediate shades. Mrs. Livingston Farrand, a recent introduction, stands at the head of the pinks. Walter Faxon is another exquisite pure pink that has been a favorite for many years. If you prefer red or crimson the selection is ample. Karl Rosefield, an inexpensive variety, is a very bright crimson with very little blue in it and a universal favorite. The darkest red of all, sometimes called the black peony, is Mons. Martin Cahuzac. This is a favorite with the men. There are several near yellow peonies, Primevere and Laura Dessert being popular.

Not only are peonies beautiful in color and petal formation but also in their widely varying types. Single peonies with their graceful wide spreading petals surrounding a spun gold center make charming bouquets as well as effective garden decoration. The Bride, adorned in her shimmering gown of white, is a good example. The fluffy semi-doubles brightened with colored stamens interspersed among the petals appeal to those of artistic temperament. The Japanese type is unusual and decorative with its curiously twisted and multi-colored staminodes, surrounded by a ring of gaily colored petals. Mikado with its waved cupped petals of dark dull crimson is the most popular of this type.

Not only do peonies reward the gardener with a wealth of beautiful bloom but they are the joy of the amateur by reason of their hardiness, comparative freedom from disease and insect pests, ease of culture and adaptation to different kinds of soil. Its will to live and bloom under adverse conditions and the decorative value of both plant and flower make it one of the "must haves" of the garden. The peony does not become bedraggled and unsightly when its blooms fade. Snip off the seed pods and watch the autumn tints make your peony row a thing of beauty. From the time they push their ruddy noses through the loam until Mr. Killingfrost breathes his chilly breath, they help to make your garden look vernal.

Fall is the best time to plant. Directions for planting are simple. Make a hole large enough so that the roots are not crowded. Stir a handful of steamed bonemeal into the hole. Have it deep enough so that the eyes are not more than two inches below the surface. Heap a cone-shaped mound of dirt over your plant. Level this off in the spring. This protection is necessary for the first season only. Don't plant them too near big trees or shrubbery or where the water stands on the ground for a part of the year. Do not remove the tops until they are dead and dry.

When the wintry days are over  
And the robins start to wing  
Past the swiftly melting snowbanks  
And the Mistress of the Spring  
Wakes again her cradled children  
In their cradled sleeping-room,  
Then you know the time is coming  
When the pineys start to bloom.

# THE BEAUTIFUL PINK PEONIES

*By Tom Richards, Boyceville, Wisconsin*

My personal list of favorite pink peonies is heavily influenced by a past member of our Society, Clarence Lienau. I only met Clarence once and that was at a peony convention dinner at a hotel in downtown Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I was just starting out with peonies at the time and my head had been dazzled by the exhibition display at the Mitchell Conservatory Domes. I remember in particular the Grand Champion bloom was CYTHEREA, exhibited by Marvin Karrels. It is one of the best of all time pinks exhibited by one of the best of all time exhibitors.

At the banquet that evening, I could have sat next to anyone and been educated about peonies, but fate sat my wife, Mary, and me between Mr. Lienau on the one, and Gus and Charlotte Sindt on the other. My peony education really began in earnest. Any question I could dream up that evening was generously and authoritatively answered. I even had Mary taking notes.

However the forum that Clarence Lienau mainly used in communicating his knowledge about peonies was the *BULLETIN*. For me, in particular, the June 1982 (#242) issue stands out. In it Mr. Lienau listed his recommendations for pink and white peonies and it is the most thumbed through issue of all my old Bulletins.

At that point in my peony collecting that I followed, was a simple rule: "If Clarence Lienau says it is good, then it is good." The rule still holds, although I have added several excellent pinks that were recommended by others. The main lack in my present collection of pink peonies is lactifloras semi-double.

Clarence recommended three pink semi-double varieties: **SPRING BEAUTY**, **SILVA SAUNDERS**, and **LIEBCHEN**. I have never been able to locate sources for them and therefore are absent from my list of favorite pinks which follows:

## **Hybrids:**

**PAULA FAY**—my favorite peony. The shiny green upright foliage presets the large hot pink bloom early in the season. The petals are crinkled and the flower stands out whether viewed from across the yard or up close. Gold medal peony.

**CYTHEREA**—probably the best variety for cut flowers. The huge cup shape bloom of densely packed coral pink petals will last a week when cut, opening slightly more each day. The plant is low growing and the stems are strong and perfectly upright. In the sun, the blooms will fade to a peachy pink color. Gold medal peony.

**ROSELETTE**—my favorite early peony. Roselette makes a dense bush of large upright foliage that holds the single light pink flowers high in the air. The flowers have a darker pink speckling when viewed up close and they bloom at the very beginning of the peony season.

**FRIENDSHIP**—probably the purest pink color of them all. Baby

ribbon pink petals with white edges. It is low growing with cup shaped single flowers and is very popular with garden visitors.

**CORAL FAY**—the very attractive finely cut foliage is topped by the coral pink semi-double flowers. It is a vigorous and very early flowering peony.

**LAURA MAGNUSON**—a late blooming dark pink semi-double with perfectly upright stems. The vibrant color tends to make oriental poppies which bloom at the same time appear a little dull. Enough said.

#### **Lactifloras - Singles**

**PINK PRINCESS**—darker pink speckled on a pale pink background give an overall light pink appearance to the single flowers. It blooms midseason on a tall upright plant.

**SEA SHELL**—a popular award winning variety with rounded cup shaped medium pink single flowers on good straight stems.

**SPARKLING STAR**—an early blooming variety with long petals, dark pink single blossoms. The foliage is a particularly attractive dark green color.

#### **Japanese:**

**CORA STUBB**—raspberry pink guard petals surround a large “ice cream scoop” of vanilla and pink petaloids in the center of each bloom. A vigorous growing peony with attractive foliage and lots of bloom.

**VANITY**—Gus Sindt recommends this variety as an excellent landscape specimen. It is low growing with good stems and covers itself with attractive medium size Japanese flowers that are light pink throughout.

**GAY PAREE**—rosy pink guard petals frame cream and pink staminoids that will fade to near white in the sun. There are many medium size blooms on a vigorously growing plant.

#### **Doubles:**

**BEV**—the large blooms are a deep pink at the petal base that fades to almost white at the tips giving a frosted look. The stems are very upright and close together making a particular attractive landscape plant.

**WHOPPER**—a gigantic bomb type flower in a classic pink hue. The base of the bomb is made of creamy white petals; the rest of the bomb and the radial collar are satiny pink. The stems are truly excellent for such a large bloom. A single flower in a vase makes a complete bouquet.

**WILFORD JOHNSON**—the stems grow so close together on this peony that the blooms crowd one another, covering the entire top of the plant. The flowers are a dark pink full double and very effective in the landscape.

**VIVID ROSE**—an always dependable peony with lots of bloom

late in the season. The flowers are dark pink rose form, double.

**PRINCESS MARGARET**—a true aristocrat and a supreme exhibition flower. A very, very large dark pink cup form, double.

**DOLORODEL**—a huge and delicate pink ball shaped flower. A late bloomer on tall strong stems. A gold medal peony.

**PINK JAZZ**—a very large and full double of hot dark pink. A peony that calls attention to itself in a very striking manner.

\* \* \* \*

Mr. W. George Waters, Editor of the *Pacific Horticulture* has given his permission for "King of the Flowers, Queen of the Herbs: The Peony" by Kendall W. Gambrill, to be published in this issue of the *Bulletin*.

All peony species are not winter hardy in this northern climate while in the southern area, the climate is more like their natural habitat.

Peony species are rare, difficult to locate in their natural environment. To save these valuable species, Mr. Leo Fernig of France is devoting his time to this effort.

This international network of interested people is trying to locate plants in the wild, collect seeds, and have an exchange so they may be grown in various gardens.

Mr. Fernig's address is: LaFougere, Lucinges, 74380 Bonne, France.

Dr. Kent Crossley has more information about species, his work, and interest in them.

—Editor

Over the years there has been considerable interest by American Gardeners in species peonies. The level of this interest appears to have waxed and waned with some regularity since the 1930s. It is likely that the article which follows this note will again rekindle enthusiasm for these wonderful plants.

There are several important issues that need to be defined before you read the article. Firstly, many *Paeonia* species are not available—except as seed—to most U.S. gardeners. Of course, *Paeonia tenuifolia flore plena* is an exception but even the single flowered fernleaf ("Simplex") is very limited in availability. The other species of *Paeonia* I grow (*P. wittmanniana*, *P. peregrina*, *P. officinalis*, *P. lactiflora* and *P. arietina*) were raised from seed or imported from England.

Secondly, hardiness is an issue. (Understandably, for many *Paeonia* species are from much warmer areas than the upper Midwest). I have lost several plants of *P. anomala* and there are a number of other species that I am certain would not make it through one Minnesota winter. I have recently received seeds of *P. japonica* and *P. obovata* from a friend in Connecticut, and I am anxious to see how these grow in Minnesota.

—Dr. Kent Crossley

# King of Flowers, Queen of Herbs: the Peony

KENDALL W. GAMBRILL

*The peony of today—too little known and too seldom sung— the brilliant result of years of steadfast devotion and untiring effort on the part of peony lovers and hybridisers, is the most superb and commanding flower which the garden holds.*

Alice Harding, *The Book of the Peony*, 1917

Peonies conjure up images of old maid great aunts and cemetery flowers on Memorial Day. The ancients accorded them more exalted associations—to the Chinese they were the king of flowers; to the Greeks, the queen of herbs. For 2,000 years they have adorned Chinese gardens and figured in the art of the Orient as supreme expressions of floral beauty. For centuries they have occupied the cultivated plots of Europeans as components of monastery medicinal collections and exemplars of cottage garden stalwarts. They have been favorites of those who choose to express themselves by reordering the design of plants: Japanese specialists, French nurserymen, and American enthusiasts have all reflected their cultures' concepts of beauty in the hybrids they have produced. Peonies may be perceived in different ways, but they are not easily ignored.

Before peonies came to be used as ornaments, they were potent medicine for early cultures. The Chinese used the outer skin of peony roots to treat high blood pressure and other vascular disorders. The Greeks considered the roots effective against fever, poisons, and evil spirits. The American Indians also turned to the roots to make a tea to relieve

stress. For good reason the name of the plant honors Paeon, physician to the gods of Olympus.

Beyond ornament and medicine, peonies have been a rich source of study and controversy for taxonomists. Although peonies display great variation in characteristics, there are few consistent or neat separations between them. Long years of cultivation add confusion with altered geographic ranges and uncertain origins for some of the plants found today. Botanists in western Europe generally recognize an arrangement of the genus that differs from that current in the Soviet Union and China. None of these systems suits the needs of horticulture well, since a telling characteristic for a scientist is of little import to the gardener and vice versa. I have chosen to follow F.C. Stern, whose *A Study of the Genus Paeonia*, though forty years old, still provides a fairly complete coverage of the genus.

The most regrettable result of centuries of work with peonies is the garden dominance of beefy domesticated breeds. We seldom meet with examples of nature's own rendering of this plant. The scarcity of wild forms is not unique to peonies. Ornamental genera from *Iris* and *Tulipa* to *Rosa* and *Rhododendron* have fared



similarly. For the diligent plantsman the reward for searching out the species is the same for all such subjects. In the works of nature we find variety and grace, plants of balanced proportions and distinct personality. Producing hybrids with large flowers is satisfying plant husbandry; accommodating species through their seasons of interest is gratifying partnership with nature.

Peonies are herbaceous perennials that flower in spring and early summer. They unfurl handsome leaves in early spring, flaunt sumptuous flowers at high spring, and maintain respectable foliage until fall. There are also tree peonies, which qualify as shrubs; their woody stems are impressive, but gardeners recognize them as stilts upon which leaf and flower shoots will build for several years until overtaken by vigorous new growth from ground level. In gardens, all peonies can fill some herbaceous role.

Though all peonies might be considered herbaceous perennials, it would be a mistake to assign all to the herbaceous border or similarly standardized uses. Since wild peonies possess details and harmonies that yield strong character, they are best placed in situations that take full advantage of that character. Try them where their flowers will provide satisfying color combinations while their simple, bold form is set off among spring-flowering shrubs and other perennials. The variety of flower color offers many choices, and the foliage furnishes rich detail, often introducing startling contrasts in color and texture. Those with large-scale leaves stand out best against the fine textures of heathers, evergreen azaleas, grasses, and plants with blade-shaped leaves such as irises, kniphofias, and daylilies.

Peonies demand good site preparation and thoughtful placement. They do not like to be moved around, preferring to remain in their assigned position, increasing in girth and ornamental value. They are not fussy about soil pH; many peonies originated in alkaline regions, so whether you garden with rhododendrons or lilacs, peonies can be made part of your scheme. In addition to two-foot-deep, humusy soil and minimal disturbance, peonies appreciate sunshine and warmth. Their heri-

tage is part Mediterranean. Most do well with a full southern exposure in cool gardens, while preferring the shelter of boulders, shrubs, or open trees in hot areas. But peonies also have a strong continental heritage. While they like heat, they can withstand cold; many are hardy to  $-20^{\circ}\text{F}$ . Indeed, many peonies require a period of winter chill before making regular annual growth, a trait that renders some unsuitable in climates with very mild winters. Their only other requirement involves planting depth: the junction of root and growth buds should be within two inches of the soil surface.

In the discussion that follows, the plants are grouped by region of origin. Geographic distribution is a useful basis for grouping plants both for study and for consideration of garden potential. Cultural requirements are often similar for plants from the same region, and it is easier to get to know the plants if we associate their characteristics with the habitats in which they evolved and flourish.

## Peonies of Western Europe

Peonies from the western Mediterranean are low growing and generally bear early-season pink flowers. The gem is *Paeonia cambessedesii*, a Majorca native with intense cerise-rose flowers and leaves that are grayish green above and boldly maroon-red beneath. This plant falls victim to severe freezes in Britain and colder parts of the Pacific Northwest; the early flowers are ruined by late frost. On the other hand, it should be one of the best peonies for southern California and regions with similar climate where average garden soil and moderate sun and water will do. Where winters are less mild, mulch to keep the ground from freezing and avoid waterlogged soils.

*Paeonia coriacea*, from Spain, Morocco, and Algeria, also needs a warm, sheltered spot in Britain, but should do well in mild-winter areas, where its early growth and rosy flowers will not be damaged by frost.

*Paeonia broteroi*, from the hills of Spain and Portugal, is another low grower with rose-pink flowers. The dark, shiny, green leaves are composed of narrower and more numerous leaflets

than those of its Majorcan and north African relatives. It also is more hardy, but still a good candidate for mild-winter gardens.

Some widely distributed peonies from the European mainland also are good garden subjects. *Paeonia mascula*, with deep pink flowers, and *P. officinalis*, with red flowers, are the traditional peonies of western civilization, believed by the ancient Greeks to be protected by the gods. They have long been used in household gardens as sturdy and reliable ornamentals. The wide distribution of *P. mascula*—from England, France, and Germany to Cyprus and Armenia—may be due in part to the fact that the plant was cultivated in medieval monasteries for its curative properties. *P. officinalis* ranges naturally from southeastern France through Switzerland and Italy down the Adriatic Coast to Albania. Pink and white plus multi-petaled, double-flowered plants are widely grown in cultivation. Of strong constitution, these plants prefer a moderate winter chill. In warmer climates, give them a north-facing site and open exposure. In the Pacific Northwest my own double reds (probably 'Rubra Plena') survive spraying with herbicide and being disinterred through late summer, yielding their annual frumpy splash of crimson in early May.

## Peonies of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus

From the Mediterranean come the white-flowered peonies of Sicily and Greece (*Paeonia mascula* var. *hellenica*), of Crete (*P. clusii*), and of Rhodes (*P. rhodia*). Though in Britain these are difficult to grow, and especially to flower, they are promising candidates for California gardens and should be tried in the Pacific Northwest in bright, warm, sheltered exposures protected from morning sun. *P. clusii* should be particularly rewarding, with its generous three- to four-inch flowers emitting the scent of cloves, the narrow leaflets yielding an elegant, finely cut texture, and the deeply pink stems providing a pleasing contrast.

*Paeonia daurica* has early-season, pinkish magenta flowers and rounded leaflets. This is a

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sturdy plant that makes a strong contribution to the landscape. *P. kesrouanensis*, from Syria and Lebanon, has rose-pink flowers and should be a good prospect for mild-winter gardens.

The easily cultivated *Paeonia mascula* subsp. *arietina*, found from Trieste through Yugoslavia but centered in Greece and Turkey, bears flowers that vary from delicate gray-pink, particularly attractive with the grayish foliage, to red. *P. anomala* spills over the Ural Mountains into Asia, but it is similar to *P. mascula* and *P. officinalis* in its hardy constitution and robust growth to three feet. The Balkan Peninsula, Italy, and Romania provide us with *P. peregrina* an alluring plant with softly scarlet to coral petals curving to brandy-snifter shape. Handsome support is furnished by deep green, finely grooved, strap-shaped leaflets. In testimony to its ornamental qualities, nurseries propagate and distribute selected cultivars such as 'Sunbeam', 'Sunshine', and 'Fire King', though usually under the incorrect specific epithet *lobata*. The narrowing of leaflets reaches its extreme in *P. tenuifolia*, which gives the effect of fennel leaves. Such delicate texture is not typical of peonies, but there is nothing insub-

*Paeonia tenuifolia*. Photographs by the author





*Paeonia suffruticosa*

stantial about its flowers. They are sheer bombast with bright red petals spreading wide in single flowers and a crowded mass of petals the same color in the double flowers of *P. tenuifolia* 'Plena'. Both have been grown for several centuries in Britain and America. *P. tenuifolia* is tough enough for the climate of the mid-western United States and in eastern Europe from Berlin to Helsinki and Moscow.

The Caucasus region, where Europe meets Asia between the Black and Caspian seas, is a storehouse of distinctive ornamental plants. With its peonies it strikes gold. This is the home of the only yellow-flowered herbaceous peony. In mid-spring plants of *Paeonia mlokosewitschii* bear softly tinted, sulphur-yellow flowers shaped like tangerines. The shade of yellow is that same subtle yet effective sort found in the atypically colored members of other genera with predominantly purple, pink, or red flowers, including *Rosa*, *Rhododendron*, *Thalictrum*, and *Digitalis*. This cold-hardy peony is rare in the wild, especially plants with deep yellow flowers, and it is an endangered plant in the Soviet Union. The

Swedish collector Wendelbo found it in Iran, and we are indebted to him for a plant of more compact habit and clear yellow flowers.

Considering yellowness alone, *P. wittmanniana* seems a poor relation, but in garden worthiness it is valued more highly by many experienced growers. The creamy flowers open to elegant bowls with red stigmas and filaments, above which ride golden anthers. Robust foliage contributes a wholesome look. *P. wittmanniana* var. *macrophylla* has nine-inch, rounded leaflets and grows to three feet high. These Caucasian peonies adapt well to British and Pacific Northwest gardens and are worth the bother in southern climes as well as in areas of harsh winters, where a thick mulch should be provided if snow cannot be relied upon to protect from temperatures below  $-5^{\circ}\text{F}$ .

## Herbaceous Peonies of Asia

In the Himalaya of northwest India we find the thoroughly Asian *Paeonia emodi*. This is much more of a woodland plant than generally is expected of peonies. Shiny, cut, and pointed leaflets of celery green accompany

*Paeonia anomala*



Peonies /

flowers of pure white. *P. sterniana*, from Tibet, is another white-flowered peony. These are rare garden plants, but useful for their color, their acceptance of shady sites, and their reasonable tolerance of low temperatures.

From eastern Asia comes the plant that is most used in breeding garden peonies today. *Paeonia lactiflora* (*P. albiflora*), with white flowers, ranges widely from Tibet to Siberia. This peony bears multiple flowers on each stem, a desirable characteristic for a garden plant. Cultivated in China for over 2,000 years and for nearly as long in Japan, it has provided much raw material for twentieth-century garden hybrids. Over the past two centuries in Europe and America, *P. lactiflora* has been further crossed and elaborated to yield the standard multi-petaled, white, pink, and occasionally red fragrant flowers that mark the culmination of spring and onset of summer. Known as Chinese peonies in Britain and Japanese peonies in the United States, these plants need winter chill to perform well and handily withstand deep freezes to  $-30^{\circ}\text{F}$ . They flourish in the Pacific Northwest, but wherever fuchsias can be overwintered outside, *P. lactiflora* will be disappointing.

Plants of *Paeonia obovata*, which hails from northeast Asia, may have rose-pink flowers, but plants now in cultivation in Britain and America are the white-flowered *P. obovata* var. *willmottiae* or the cultivar 'Alba'. This plant is exquisite, an inviolate shrine of natural design. Fragile, glaucous, reddish stems and leaves unfurl at the same time as daffodils. Flower buds are a jeweler's fancy—smooth, plum sepals parting at the top to reveal satiny, cream-colored petals. Finally, a round ivory bud relaxes and opens into a flower of curved white petals gathered about yellow, pollen-laden stamens. The flowers last only a week, but the plant continues to entertain, the leaves doubling in size to reach two feet or more and the fertilized ovaries swelling first into a caricature of a medieval harlequin's headgear, then splitting to present a crazy mix of bright red and deep blue seeds.

*Paeonia veitchii* is a more casual charmer, a medium-sized Chinese peony with late-spring and early-summer flowers of the same soft

magenta to rose and white as the fall-flowering Japanese anemones. The flat-faced, two-inch flowers are produced in multiples on long stems. In the garden it is an unpretentious wildling, its numerous and narrowly cut leaves making a light texture. It volunteers readily if seeds are left to settle into their preferred site of lightly shaded, humusy soil.

## Shrubby Peonies of Asia

Tree peonies exemplify China's astonishing wealth of plants. These shrubby plants, with bold leaves and flower colors ranging from blackish red through pink to white and even yellow, maintain woody stems up to eight feet tall and can grow to boulder-like masses eighteen feet in diameter. The leaves may measure two feet from petiole base to tip of the leaf.

*Paeonia suffruticosa*, the most flamboyant of the tree peonies, has been in cultivation the longest. Through the winter the plant is a cluster of thick stems, three to six feet tall. In early spring reddish leaves push from the broad buds. If the plant is well established, the cluster of new leaves will encircle a reddish bud that swells, flattens, and finally opens grandly into a flower of crepe-like petals that surround the central cluster of golden stamens and stigma. Flowers of the Chinese cultivars can be red, pink, white, cream, or mauve with numerous petals. Japanese cultivars range as widely in color but hold more closely to the single petals of *P. suffruticosa* in the wild.

*Paeonia suffruticosa* is adaptable and easy to grow. Established plants withstand temperatures as low as  $-30^{\circ}\text{F}$ , but require less winter chill than herbaceous hybrids. Their most worrisome habit is the eager rush into growth at the first hint of spring, exposing soft shoots and buds to freezing where early-season temperatures are erratic. To avoid losses, plants should be placed so that they will respond slowly to early spring warming—a north-facing aspect shielded from sun—and so that they will be protected from frost.

*Paeonia delavayi*, native to Yunnan province, China, attains proportions roughly half the size of *P. suffruticosa* with similar hardiness and cul-

tural requirements. The long, narrow leaflets are more delicate, however, and the three-inch flowers are blackish red.

*Paeonia lutea*, from Yunnan and Szechwan as well as Tibet, is a similar plant with nodding, pure yellow flowers. *P. lutea* var. *ludlowii*, from Tibet, is more robust and bears richly yellow flowers that, though small in proportion to the large leaves, are a stunning addition to the tree peony palette.

The runt of the litter among tree peonies is *Paeonia potaninii*, reliably under three feet tall. This is another native of Yunnan and Szechwan provinces, which, like *P. delavayi*, produces blackish red flowers. The narrow, linear leaflets of this plant produce an even finer texture, and the flowers are little more than two inches across. To compensate the petals can be had in yellow (var. *trollioides*) and white ('Alba') as well as dark red. Though the plant is small and its flowers not showy, the ferny texture of the leaves furnishes a pleasing contrast with rhododendrons, camellias, and other broadleaved evergreens as well as with hostas, bergenias, and similarly bold herbaceous plants.

## American Peonies

The American peonies are herbaceous, but their flowers are even smaller than those of the Chinese *Paeonia potaninii*. Their distribution in this part of the world reflects their Mediterranean connection. *P. californica* occurs from San Diego to Monterey at elevations from sea level to 4,000 feet. The climate range closely resembles that of the Iberian peninsula and the islands of Sardinia, Corsica, and Sicily. The plant prefers north- and west-facing sites where humus has accumulated and scrubby trees protect it from browsing animals. Like a true Mediterranean, its seasons are based on the availability of moisture rather than temperature. With the first winter rains it rushes into growth, flowering in January or February.

The closely related *Paeonia brownii* is found at higher elevations, from the Sierra Nevada in California north through the Cascades in Oregon and Washington and east to the Wyoming Rockies. Its natural preferences are high

## Propagating Peonies

Peonies are propagated primarily by division and by seed, although cuttings and scions are sometimes used. *Paeonia suffruticosa* has been propagated by cuttings, and other shrubby types may be successfully increased by this method, but this is an area for experimentation. Named tree peonies are propagated commercially by scions or cuttings grafted to the roots of herbaceous peonies. The graft union is planted at least four inches below ground, and the scion is encouraged to develop its own roots while the herbaceous stock is discouraged from thriving and suckering. *P. delavayi*, which does not set good seed readily, and the variant of *P. suffruticosa* called Rock's variety, which should be kept pure, are likely candidates for grafting.

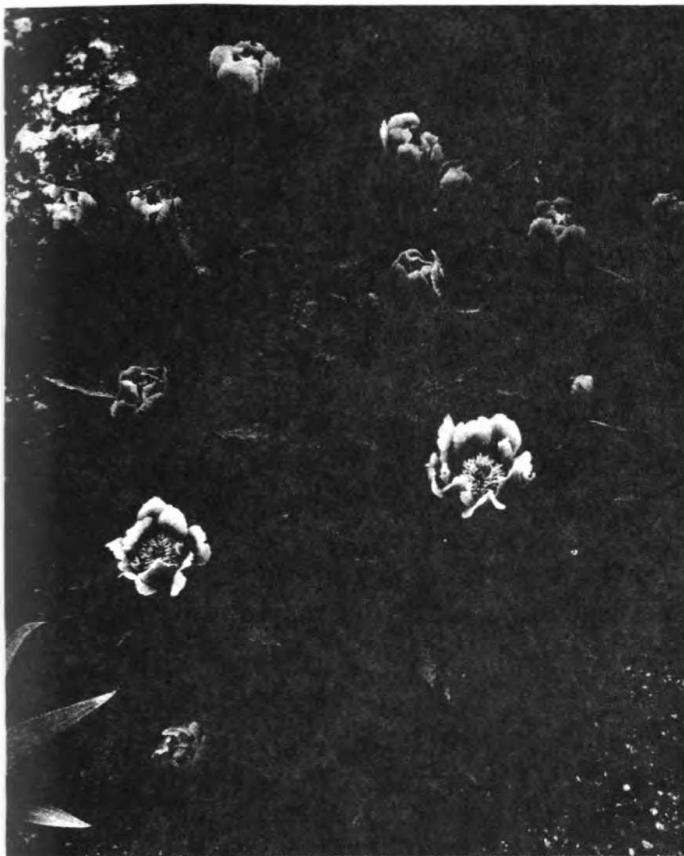
Division is simple when a sizable clump of any peony is available. The dormant plant is lifted in fall, winter, or very early spring and cut into smaller pieces, each containing a resting growth bud and a proportional chunk of roots, usually a carrot-like tuber with smaller feeder roots. Peonies that spread by underground shoots produce outlier sections that may be dug without disturbing the central plant (*Paeonia potaninii*, *P. peregrina*, *P. tenuifolia*, *P. mascula* subsp. *arietina*, and *P. officinalis* are examples). For others recovery will be slower.

Some peonies are reluctant to set seed. Even when seed can be had, the germination process requires patience and attention. After seeds ripen they must experience one winter before the radical root emerges. After the root reaches two to four inches, the seed requires another chilling before the leaves will appear. Thus it is two years from flowering to birth of new plants.

During the lengthy delivery, seeds are vulnerable to scratching birds, digging animals, burrowing grubs, soil-borne fungus diseases, and the inevitable probing of the midwife gardener. Care and restraint are needed, along with a fast-draining soil mix of light, friable texture in clean plastic containers covered with mesh hardware cloth. Seeds should be planted about twice their diameter below the soil surface. Containers should be left where they will experience the first winter's weather, then maintained free of insects and weeds and moderately moist through the summer. During the second winter they should be protected from excess moisture and temperatures below 15°F. Peonies will produce flowers from three to five years after germination.

Peonies /

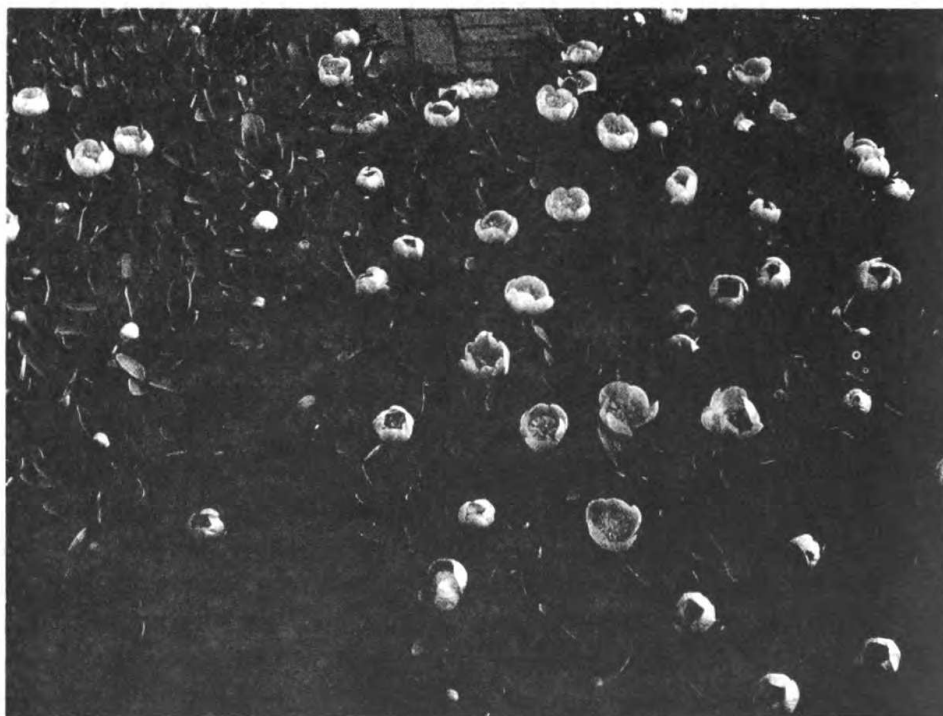




*Paeonia cambessedesii*

and dry; it grows from 3,000 to 6,000 feet where seasonal variation is sharp, with long, snow-covered winters and hot, sun-baked summers. Its calendar also is based on water; it lies dormant when the ground dries out in summer, and grows urgently with the melting of snow.

These adaptations to low precipitation and either low-elevation, mild winters or snowy, alpine climates make cultivation difficult in Britain or in the Pacific Northwest. And with one- to two-inch flowers hidden among the leaves and charitably described as brownish maroon, why should we bother to grow them? Aside from the challenge of catering successfully to their special needs, gardeners may find them worthwhile for their foliage; the thinly divided leaves, resembling certain kinds of geranium or dicentra, emerge with that distinctive muted cranberry flower color typical of peonies and then quickly switch to bluish gray. To grow these American natives successfully, allow for a thorough dormant period in cold or dry weather, provide good drainage at the plant collar with pumice or grit from one inch below the resting buds, and allow for abundant sunshine in summer with moisture in the lower root zone. ♀



*Paeonia mlokosewitschii*

/ Pacific Horticulture

## ERRORS ON PARADE

*Mr. Kelsey, who was an experienced peony man, wrote many articles and poems for the Bulletin. He was gifted in his writing, always leaving a positive message for the reader. This article is a prize and one you will enjoy—especially anyone that has ever tried to exhibit.—Editor.*

*Ernest Flint Kelsey, East Aurora, N.Y. — Bulletin No. 86*

Perhaps a recount of my failures, mistakes and experiences by the “trial and error” method of getting peony blooms ready for the big show may possibly be of some help to those who are about to make their first plunge. I warn you that this article will be of little or no use or interest to the veterans of the show room. To them I doff my weathered garden hat. I hope they will write on the “success” side of this subject to the great profit of all of us.

When it was decided to hold the 1941 show at Syracuse, 150 miles from these small gardens, several friends wrote urging me to exhibit. The project looked impossible and I dreaded to attempt it. However, Harry Little’s friendly urging, Christman’s encouraging letters, as well as those from Bongers, Peyton, Foster and others gave me courage to attempt to measure blooms with the champions.

Mr. Little explained about covering the buds with small bags held in place with rubber bands and that these bags should be pulled up against the base of the bud so that the opening bud would have room in the bag to unfold its petals. He also explained that you could tell when they were ready to cut by squeezing the bags. After I had bought my fourth big lot of bags the cracker barrell congress at the corner store looked at me suspiciously. I heard one of them say between squirts of tobacco juice, “What suppose he’s doin’ with all them air bags?” They “rubbered” again when I cornered the local market on rubber bands. Day after day I slipped the bags over what I considered the largest buds. On my return from the show I noticed that the biggest and best blooms were on the thickest stems. Perhaps you may think it strange I had not observed this before. “Taking in” a show is also taking in a lot of information, perhaps of greater benefit to you than medals and ribbons. The next time—if there ever is a next time—I will not only look at the size of the bud but also the thickness and general appearance of the stem and the plant as a whole. My first mistake was my failure to disbud enough of my peonies. Each season I purposely leave some with their laterals intact. Many people do not want them disbudded, preferring them with laterals so that they may enjoy the bloom longer. However, I might have disbudded more and had a better selection when cutting time came. Disbudding is a slow, messy job, but it is one of the “must do” details to get prize-winning blooms. The gummy stuff from those lateral buds tastes like sorghum

molasses seasoned with bitter aloes. Tasting it is not a necessary detail, neither is smearing it all over your pants. I admire the industry of ants, but for epicurean taste give me the honey bee. Squeezing time finally arrived. I began the solemn ritual of squeezing those bags. Said one, "you must learn by experience," and as I had none, I just squeezed and squeezed and wondered then pondered and squeezed again, "squeeze play" in baseball parlance. I squeezed bagged peonies in my dreams, finally reaching the height of the ridiculous when I squeezed the buns at the dinner table. When to cut was as dark and mysterious to me as why that wart came on my neighbor's nose.

My next mistake was in packing them in full sun and in a tool room that was none too cool. Afterwards I learned that it is best to chill them somewhat before shipping. There is no refrigeration plant nearby but I could have packed them in a fairly cool cellar. After packing them I had to drive seven miles to an Express Office. From there they were taken some distance to the train. I found the Express Co. very helpful. Several times they made extra trips just to get my blooms on the first train.

About the arrangements for their storage in Syracuse I knew nothing, except that Harry Little took excellent care of them, unpacking and putting them in water and even arranging to have them moved to the Exhibition building at just the right time. What small success I had was due to the work of Harry Little, John Bongers and W.F. Christman—perhaps there were others who helped on that busy morning. My next mistake became apparent when arranging them for the show tables. I neglected to have blooms of the same kind together. When we finally removed the paper bags and got them into the containers on the long work table we had a long and tiresome job getting them separated for the various classes. Had not John Bongers come to my rescue, it never would have been done. It was all new and baffling to me. It was at this time that I discovered my biggest mistake. I did too much squeezing—that is I continued my squeezing process too long. It gave me a "sick at the stomach" feeling when I held a bald-headed bloom and watched a mess of petals fall at my feet. Typewriters have no characters to indicate weeping, so let's pass on. I recall that Harry Little once told me that he would rather have his blooms reach the show table coming than going. I think we will all agree to that statement. There is a certain expectant charm to an opening flower that disappears when it passes its prime. Some of mine were "going" and some were "going, going, gone" and did not look like the blooms I had seen at home the day I left for the show. I would say from my experience it is better to cut them too early than too late.

It seems to me there are two essential rules to observe in preparing blooms for the show room, proper timing in cutting and chilling before packing for shipment. Of course, cold storage facilities near the show rooms are essential, but that is always provided, so the amateur need



not concern himself about that detail.

Another mistake I made was to cut too many of one kind and not enough of others. As a result I had a lot of blooms good enough to display but not enough of each kind to meet competition requirements. In other words I did not cut my blooms with specific classes in mind. Along with a sharp knife take your Exhibition program into the field. It is not a gala day when I put my mistakes on dress parade, and I am not in a mood for shouting or flag waving. I remind myself that "I know not and I know I know not," but if these "know nots" of mine are in the least degree helpful to those who are about to make their first display I will have accomplished my purpose. I would say to those who hesitate, go to it, no matter if you're green. You will get a big thrill out of it, win or lose. You will be more than repaid when you see those grand displays and meet those big showmen, who are modest, friendly and helpful to every beginner who makes his first try at the "big game."

\* \* \* \*

## *Exhibition Blooms*

To have the finest exhibition blooms, it is presumed that plants have been cared for as directed. When the buds appear, go over the plants and select the buds that have the heaviest stems immediately below the buds. They produce the largest flowers.

Label, disbud, bag, cut, store as follows.

**LABELING.** The blooms should be properly labeled, preferably as soon as selected, certainly before or at the same time they are cut. Use wired wooden tree labels. Paper labels are not satisfactory. Write the name of the variety legibly, on both sides of the label. This will save many an overturned container. Fasten the label securely to the stem, just below the bloom.

**DISBUDDING.** Removing the side buds from a stem will make the center or terminal bud a larger, better flower. This should be done when they are about the size of a pea. Take the bud between the thumb and forefinger and give it a quick outward twist and it will break off with no damage to the stem. If the main stem is damaged in the process it may cause the center bud to die.

Usually the terminal bud will open before the side buds do which often open all at once.

So, to get a fine bouquet of blooms, remove the terminal bud and you will have from three to five, or more flowers only slightly smaller than the center bud would have made, all on the same stem. The blooming period is often prolonged for a particular plant for from one to two weeks by not disbudding.

**BAGGING** the blooms will prevent weather and insect damage and keep the delicately colored flowers from being faded out by bright sun light. This should be done a week or ten days before the buds will open, when the bud is dry. Use two pound grocery bags for the large, full, doubles and smaller ones for the singles, Japanese, and the smaller doubles. Transparent bags afford no protection from the sun. Slip the bag over the bloom and fasten with a rubber band, staples, or paper clip; never with a pin, as they are dangerous. Pull the bag up until it touches the bottom of the bud. This is important, as it prevents the bloom from being distorted and keeps the stem straight. For ventilation cut a small hole in each upper corner of the bag. This will keep the bloom from being cooked by the heat of the sun. Examine the bags after each rain and if water has collected in the sacks, remove them and resack when dry. Buds should never be sacked when wet as they may mold. After the bloom begins to open, it is hard to resack without damaging it, so if you wish to examine the bloom, tear off the sack about halfway down leaving enough to hold the bloom in shape. Then pull another sack down over the first one, which may be done by holding the bloom encircled with one hand. The bags should not be removed, finally, until you are ready to use the flower.

To remove the bag, cut the rubber band or pull of the paper clip and tear off the sack. Do not pull it off.

**CUTTING.** You can tell when the bloom is ready to cut by the feel of it. Press down on the center of the bloom, through the sack, and, if it feels soft to the touch, like a marshmallow, then it is ready. Until the center softens up, the bloom will not open well when cut.

Cut-flower varieties may be cut when the first line of color appears and the first petals begin to unfold. Use a sharp knife and cut the stem about eighteen inches long, unless a longer stem is necessary. Leave at least the two bottom leaves on the stem uncut. Never cut more than two-thirds of the blooms on the plant. Remove all the leaves from the cut stem except the two upper ones. Plunge the stem into cold water up to the leaves. Take a pail of water along with you to the garden, so that there will be no delay in doing this. If the blooms have not been bagged previously, this should be done when they are cut. Make a hole in the bottom of the sack, stick the end of the stem into the bag and through the hole, then pull the bag over the bloom, leaves and all, until it touches the base of the bloom. Bagged blooms are not easily damaged by handling. The best storage temperature is about 33 or 34 degrees. It should not be over 40. The household refrigerator will serve if no better storage is available.

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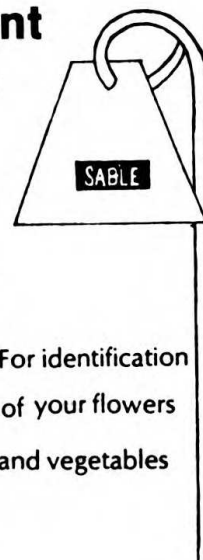
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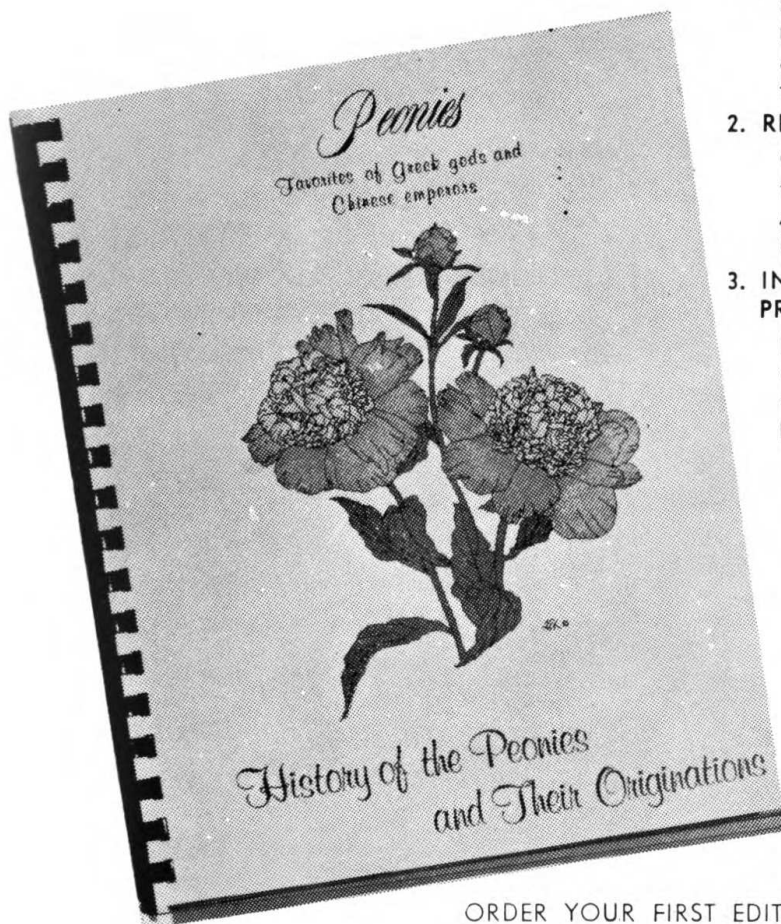
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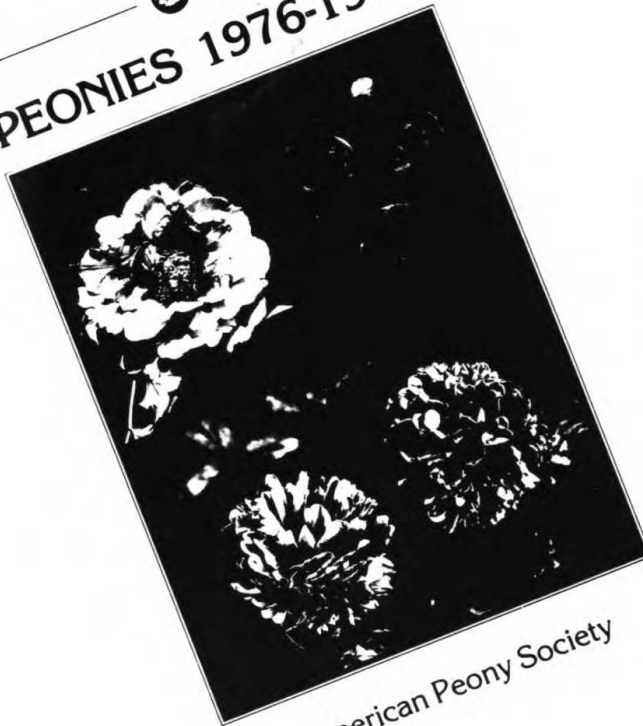
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