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JUNE 1998
NO. 306



The American Peony Society Bulletin



"Better Than Jade with Triple Magic"

Photo — Cricket Hill Garden - Thomaston, Connecticut

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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
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The AMERICAN TREE PEONY

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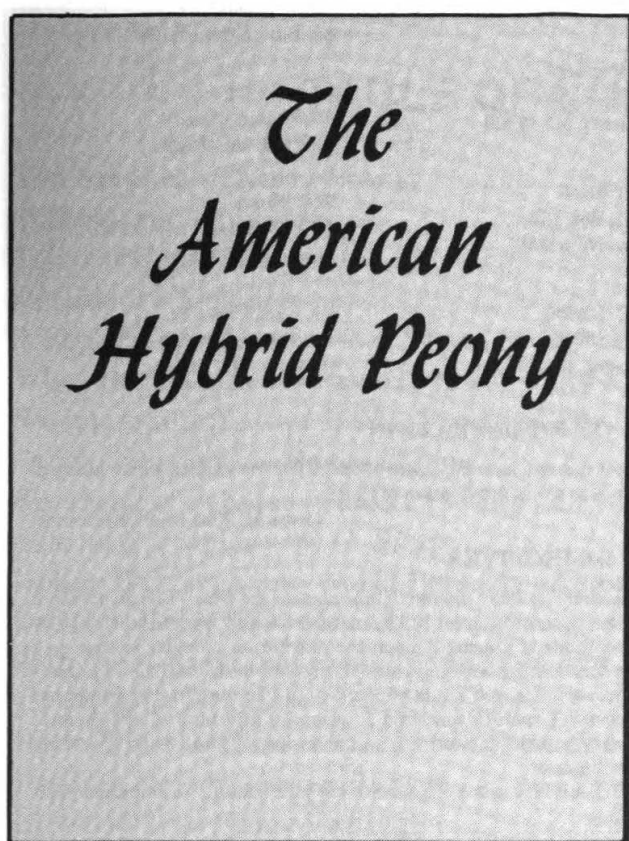
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DEPT. OF REGISTRATION

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 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 post-paid 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
Single Triennial	20.00	Life	150.00
Family Annual	10.00	Commercial membership	25.00
Family Triennial	27.50		

Family membership, any two related members in same householdOne Bulletin

Junior membership, any age through completion of high schoolSeparate Bulletin

For those who wish to further support the Society, the following special memberships are available.

Contributing	\$25.00	Supporting	\$100.00
Sustaining	50.00	Patron	250.00



AMERICAN Peony Society Bulletin



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Many people call me looking for hard to find peony varieties. I am sure that Greta also gets many similar inquiries as do all nurseries who sell peonies. Some of these varieties may no longer be available. There are reasons why older varieties may no longer be available. Here at Reath's Nursery we do not propagate varieties that we feel are inferior to others. This is done at all nurseries of course and different nurseries have different criteria for their selections.

Some varieties are adapted to certain conditions and may perform poorly at one location and be eliminated from production while doing well at another garden location. There are a few varieties which are difficult to find in the peony nursery trade and it would be unfortunate to lose them because they are so beautiful and unique. Society members can help to save what they think are good varieties by promoting them to fellow gardeners, society members and nurseries.

There are some varieties which should be saved by being propagated. It is impossible to propagate herbaceous peonies without disturbing the plant for division, but tree peonies are grafted and can be propagated by removing a stem or two for grafting scion wood, which is harmless to a healthy plant. If members know of a outstanding variety of tree peony that is at risk of being lost, I urge them to contact a nursery to graft it for them and maybe get it started in the peony trade.

I look forward to seeing many members at the American Peony Society Convention and Exhibition in St. Paul, Minnesota on June 12 through the 14th. Bring exhibition flowers if you can.

Sincerely,
Scott Reath

BULLETIN FRONT COVER:

BETTER THAN JADE WITH TRIPLE MAGIC

Named because the buds open green, changing to white and green, finally opening to a ruffled ball shape of pink, white and green. Size of flower 8".

Cricket Hill Garden, 670 Walnut Hill Road, Thomaston, CT 06787.
Telephone (860) 283-1042

BULLETIN BACK COVER:

LOIS' CHOICE, Laning (1993)

This beautiful double peony of two colors is divided into three sections. One-third is a warm pink, one-third a bright yellow, the final third is pink. (A tetraploid that is fertile as a pod and pollen parent.)

A REPORT FROM ALASKA

Les Brake, Box 221, Willow, Alaska 99688

Contrary to what some of you may think, Alaska is not a small island located off the coast of California. Rather, it's a vast, northern subcontinent that's the equivalent in size to twenty percent of the Lower 48. Its size is almost incomprehensible: from Ketchikan in the southeast to Attu Island in the Aleutians is seventeen hundred miles—the distance from northern Maine to Key West, Florida. Therefore, it is impossible for me to write about growing peonies in all of Alaska; I'm qualified to offer observations only about my own neck of the woods.

I live in the small, rural village of Willow, up in the Susitna Valley, about seventy miles north of Anchorage. Our four seasons consist of early winter, mid-winter, late winter, and next winter. In other words, winter is the dominant season here. For four months—November through February—the average temperature is zero degrees, and the annual snowfall is 120". Snow usually covers the ground from mid-October through April, and the last piles don't melt until mid-May or sometimes June.

Then it's my season, and is it ever glorious! The best description of summer in Alaska is that it's "nothing but a beautiful life," as one wag wrote. I remain firmly convinced we Alaskans can do some of the best gardening on the North American continent for true summertime. Nights (if you can call them that) are cool, and days are long—total light from late May until late July. Our state bird—the mosquito—is the only small pest we're challenged by.

Before I discuss the peonies in "my" garden, allow me to tell you how I feel about that possessive pronoun. I detest saying "my" garden because, in reality, I belong to it. I know who's in charge here. Besides, the grizzly bears, porcupines, coyotes, foxes, moose, Arctic hares, black ears, river otters, and God only knows what else, think it's their garden. Do you think I'm going to argue with a grizzly that leaves sixteen-inch long tracks across the garden, or with Mother Moose? No way! We'll share, ok?

Now that we've cleared up the ownership issue, let's talk about peonies. Let me say right off that I'm crazy about them. I planted my first one—the old favorite **Festiva Maxima**—in 1987; then a bed of six right in the middle of the garden in 1988. In the autumn of '89, I got behind in my garden chores, and ended up planting eighteen peonies through two feet of snow. See what I mean about who's in control here? A free man would never submit to such nonsense. Peony fever is almost like drug addiction: one was too many, and a hundred wouldn't be enough!

With the exception of three plants of **Lovely Rose** all of my initial peony plants were lactifloras. Then, due to the influence of Gra-

ham Stuart Thomas ("the practical master of modern gardening," as he's been called by the Royal Horticultural Society), I fell hard for the hybrids developed by Professor A. P. Saunders. All I can say is "**Early Windflower**, I hardly knew ye." I had read somewhere the inter-specific hybrids weren't as hardy as the lactifloras, and from bitter personal experience I can now report the veracity of that. As long as I received the usual October snowfall I had no trouble growing the magnificent modern constructions. However, the winter of '95-'96 was open, a blue screamer, with no snow cover until February. By then it was too late. We'd had forty nights below zero, and the ground was frozen to a depth of ten feet. I lost thousands of plants, including twenty-four hybrid peonies. The only hybrid to survive unscathed was **White Innocence** which was planted in a protected spot right behind the cabin. I was so sad to lose all those lovelies, but at least I had the opportunity to make their acquaintance. Unless you live beyond the edge, as I do, you simply must grow **Sunlight** and **Garden Peace** and the windflower peonies. They're exquisite!

That brutal, wipeout winter helped me to finally understand what Graham Thomas meant when he said he "collects species and selects hybrids." Had I investigated the parentage of all those hybrids, I would have been much more careful with my selections (theoretically, anyway!). I've now gone back to the species to extend the peony season, and I'm happy to report greater success with this group.

Paeonia tenuifolia 'Rubra Plena' has been in the garden for seven years; it's truly as tough as an old boot. Also coming through that wicked winter were *P. veitchii*, *P. obovata* 'Alba', *P. daurica*, *P. mlokosewitschii*, *P. peregrina*, and *P. officinalis*. The species certainly have a charm all of their own, and their early bloom makes them extremely useful in the garden. By using carefully selected hybrids and a collection of species, peonies are in bloom for nine or ten weeks. That's practically my entire growing season.

So I've learned a few things about growing peonies, and as a result I'm frequently asked to deliver slide lectures about peonies. I have given the peony presentation to four garden clubs in southcentral Alaska, and back in February I had the great privilege of delivering the lecture at the Northwest Flower and Garden Show in Seattle, which is the third largest show in the country (five-day attendance: ninety thousand). Interest was intense, and every scrap of literature I provided was snatched up by the eager audience.

Several Peony Society members generously assisted me with preparation for my talk: Judy Wilmarth of Anchorage shared her slide collection with me, and I relied on Galen Burrell's beautiful slides of various hardy species. Donald Ivey from Washington's Whidbey Island graciously spent an hour on the phone describing how peonies perform in the Puget Sound area, and then sent me a

large packet of information. In addition, Al Rogers kindly offered his assistance, and Scott Reath sent me a fat box of catalogs to distribute.

Another cherished association that's developed as a result of my membership in the American Peony Society is that with Irmtraud and Gottlob Rieck from Germany. In 1995 the Riecks toured Alaska, and, after making contact with Judy Wilmarth, came up to Willow for an afternoon. We've kept in touch, and Irmtraud generously sends me fresh species seed each autumn.

Back in 1987 when I planted **Festiva Maxima**, I couldn't have guessed where the peony path would take me. Now, more than a decade later, my life has been enormously enriched by the opulence of the peony and by the many good people it's brought into my life.

★ ★ ★ ★

WHAT RESULTS MAY BE EXPECTED FROM YOUR PEONIES?

The first spring after planting, a standard division will make one or more stems six or more inches high. Do not be discouraged if the growth is low and only one stem appears. It may bloom and it may not. There is nothing to worry about if it does not. Many of the most successful growers never allow a plant to bloom the first year. If you cannot resist the temptation to let it bloom, cut the flower as soon as it fades, immediately below the bloom. Do not allow seed to form. These first-year blooms are often not typical of the variety. If they are not, do not write the grower that the plant is untrue to name. You are probably mistaken. They rarely give you a true picture of the variety.

The second year, the number of stems is usually double the number that came the first year, and the growth is taller. The blooms, if any, are nearer normal. Cut all blooms immediately after flowering, with short stems. Some varieties take several years to make normal flowers or even any kind at all. The third year growth also generally doubles that of the second year, and the blooms should be normal in every way. Do not cut the stems too long. After the third year, the increase is slower, and after the eighth or tenth year there may be none. The finest flowers are produced from plants four to ten years old, though many varieties may give exhibition blooms for twenty or more years. Plants that have been well cared for will often live longer than the owner. There are many from fifty to a hundred years old that are still going strong. If they are forced into abnormal growth by the use of stimulants they will give out in a few years.

★ ★ ★ ★

SPRING IN MANHATTAN 1998

Vernon Kidd

The March Bulletin arrived following a heavy writing schedule, and there was time to read the latest news of our favorite flower. On April 2 the first (and latest ever) visit of the year to the island garden held many surprises. An apricot tree was prematurely in bloom, herbaceous and hybrid peonies were already above ground, and tree peonies planted just last fall were showing healthy new growth with buds already expanding as if impatient to reveal their hidden beauty.

The weekend, though cold, was warm enough for spraying the fruit trees (except the apricot) and applying Benomyl to emerging peonies. No snow-cover offered during our record-setting mild winter caused concern of possible heaving by newly planted divisions. Now several weeks later, some of the emerging buds are enormous! Particularly **Salmon Glory**, supplied by Klehm's. This is its fourth year of bloom, increasing every year since planting. A large salmon pink flower of beautiful form, it deserves its name, and nearby another Klehm peony, **Gerry**, is giving it competition in bud size and healthy growth.

A new herbaceous supplied by Reath's Nursery last fall, **Mackinaw Grand**, has three huge buds, and one of David L. Reath's last introductions, the striking tree peony **Waucedah Princess**, which bloomed for the first time last year, also sports three new buds and new stem growth. I read somewhere it was best not to allow tree peonies to bloom the first season following planting, so that all their effort goes into establishing the root system. Perhaps this is the reason **Garden Treasure**, Don Hollingsworth's winning cross between a herbaceous and tree peony, and which gave two lovely blooms last spring following its previous fall planting, has healthy growth but no buds.

One of the new European tree peonies, **Madame André de Villiers**, from Klehm's, couldn't wait to bloom, partially opening one bud in the box it came in. Each subsequent season it has increased the number of buds and stems, and the large hot pink beauty may open this week, beating all others to bloom.

The new additions last fall necessitated extensive dividing plus general soil enrichment, and the effort paid off. Nassos Daphnis' hybrid tree peony **Zephyrus**, also supplied by Reath's nursery, has healthy new stems plus three large buds waiting to open, two on the older stems and one on the newest. My first Chinese tree peony, a five-year-old transplant called **Necklace With Precious Pearls**, from Cricket Hill Garden, is a leafy bush with two nice sized buds already showing color.

The sight of Chris Laning's extraordinary new hybrid tree peony, the 1997 Grand Champion **Lois Elaine Laning**, at last year's show, remains etched in memory. It is also a reminder of how long it takes to make new introductions available, and how eager I am to have this diaphanous flower with its hard-to-describe color that changes with the light, gracing the Island garden.

A friend surprised me with an unusual gift, a slim catalogue from the Mohican Peony Gardens of West Lawn, Pennsylvania, on "How to Grow Peonies," dated 1932. Several black and white photographs

identified **Therese** (given an exceptional rating, as one of the best for cutting in their descriptive list), as well as **Lady Alexandra Duff**, **Madame de Verneville**, **Madame Ducel**, **Claire Dubois** and the tree peony **Argosy**, among others. Interesting descriptions included, for example, **La France** (Lemoine, 1901, given a 9.0 rating out of 10), was described as a very large, very late double of clear light pink, richer in the center, flecked darker toward the tips, with crimson splashes on outer petals; fragrant, tall and floriferous with strong stems and good foliage. I wonder if it is still available.

The 1932 catalogue stated, "For greater detail than we are able to give here, we refer you to the Manual of the American Peony Society," then it discusses the Society's method of rating. It was a reminder of the Society's definitive listing of registered peonies and tree peonies, and how important it is, not only for the past but for the future. Of course, "The American Peony Society 75 years," now in its second printing, is a reminder that the Society goes back to 1904!

With annual new registrations adding to an awesome catalogue of peonies, the question becomes, Which ones to choose? Where to plant them? Are they Available? Somehow space turns up, even if it's in a neighbor's yard, and I usually restrict choices to two or three divisions "this time," realizing that peonies require time to come into their full beauty.

Seeing unfamiliar varieties at the Convention and National Exhibition is both a revelation and discovery. There they are, in the flesh (so to speak) along with the newest arrivals. Recently in the mail a pleasant surprise awaited in the dual catalogues from Smirnow's Son's Peonies in Huntington, New York. They were filled with colorful photographs of both Chinese and Japanese tree peonies as well as Herbaceous peonies. In addition they have listed four Japanese tree peonies, which offer the possibility of blooming two times a year, in May and November or December! They are **Hakuho**, a stunning white, **Konnoh** and **Muregarasu**, both purple and **Shintoghen**, a red, semi-double.

A tantalizing article in the March 24 issue of the Science Times section of the *New York Times*, discussed the use of Phytochrome, a patented red plastic mulch, developed by Dr. Kasperbauer and Dr. P.G. Hunt, which is used to manipulate plants through the reflection of colors. The far-red light, just beyond human vision, as well as normal colors in this plastic mulch, manufactured by Sonoco, is reflected by the underside of green leaves.

This causes the plants to think they have competitors, and, responding to this color signal, they put out more energy into the growth above ground. This technique is already being used to grow larger tomatoes and strawberries, which are said to even taste better. Since mulch is highly recommended for peonies (preserving moisture and keeping root temperatures cool in hot weather or heaving in cold), it would be interesting to know if this technique might be helpful in producing larger peony blossoms. This could be of benefit to nurseries, which provide cut flowers for florists, and as a tool for growing even larger blooms for the home gardener. Naturally, good

soil preparation and enrichment is the most important element for successful gardening. Mulch colors are also being tested as a means of controlling insects.

Earlier a friend from Silver Spring, Maryland, wrote to inform me that the **Red Grace** divisions I had given her a few years back were now on her church's web site. She has had outstanding success with my favorite red, which she divided, giving two divisions to her still evolving church garden. Evidently, **Red Grace** likes the soil and climate of Silver Spring, and photos from both her own and the church's garden show enormous ruby red balls in full bloom, supported on sturdy stems. She also mentioned its rich fragrance, which should be added to its descriptive literature.

The Chinese opera, "The Peony Pavilion," is scheduled for this summer's Vienna Music Festival, which was to have been **Leonie Rysanek's** first season as festival president. However, the great dramatic soprano died of bone cancer in Vienna on March 7. Just last November the news of her appointment as president of the Festival was announced at the annual Richard Tucker Gala, where as guest of honor, she looked radiant and youthful, giving no hint of the illness.

Her performances at the Metropolitan Opera, in the new production of Tchaikovsky's "Queen of Spades," in the 1995-1996 season were devastating, and on her final night, the house rose in a 40 minute ovation. The roar of which filled the night over Lincoln Center Plaza as we called her back again and again. A critic from San Francisco, where she was a longtime favorite wrote, "She took us to places we had never been."

The Ming Dynasty Chinese poet and philosopher Tang Xianzu's 400-year old Chinese opera, "**The Peony Pavilion**," is being recreated by the contemporary composer Tan Dun for Vienna's Festival. The 22-hour production will also be the main event at New York's Lincoln Center Festival, presented on six consecutive nights (July 7 to 12). Additionally, three afternoon and evening performances (two sections a day) are scheduled for the weekend of July 17 to 19.

★ ★ ★ ★
OFFICIAL BUSINESS

The members of the Board of Directors that have served their three year term and are nominees for continuing for another three years are: Dr. Kent Crossley, Irwin Ewing, Roy Klehm, Kit Klehm and Don Hollingsworth.

We have two vacancies, Retiring W. G. Sindt and C. F. Spangler. Nominees will be presented for election at the Business meeting June 13, 1998.

★ ★ ★ ★
REGISTRATIONS

BOB (R. W. Tischler), Tischler Peony Garden, Faribault, Minnesota, March 16, 1998.

Parentage, unknown, early, semi-double hybrid. Black-red in color. Quite large bloom on strong, stiff stems. Excellent foliage.

★ ★ ★ ★

SPEAKING OF PEONIES

Robert G. Wise, Sidney, Ohio

In October, 1997, I received a call from the Versailles Garden Club. They asked if I would speak at one of their monthly meetings. The subject of peonies was their motivation for calling me.

Thinking May or June would be a good month to speak about peonies, I accepted. Well, to my surprise, I had to choose between January and February. How do you show a garden club your best peony blooms in the dead of Ohio winters?

At this point my interest in this speaking engagement was waning fast. Then an idea clicked. Video tape! I had recorded several hours of video tape during the National Shows at Kingwood Center in 1990 and 1993, plus the 1994 show at the Chicago Botanical Gardens.

Another problem: how could I condense two to three hours into a thirty-minute program? I also wanted to include some of my peony blooms. So I began to view the tapes, and make notes on scenes of interest to the club members.

After reading the camcorder instructions again—specifically, how to record from a VCR with a television monitor—I finally reached the point where I could record the pictures on the TV screen, (if I pushed the right buttons!)

After a couple of weeks of editing and recording, I had a finished tape. But the sound was terrible, uneven levels and inaudible in spots, etc. So after viewing the tape several times, I wrote a narration and recorded this over the original. It certainly was more time and work than I had originally planned.

Due to the unseasonably warm winter, I was able to dig some of my peony seedlings from the previous seasons to show the club how small the roots are on seedlings. After a week inside the house, they suddenly sprouted up to about two inches high.

This gave me another brilliant idea—to take along seedlings of different sizes, with some peony seeds [which I forgot to plant at the proper time last fall].

After calling the club to verify the exact date, time and place, etc., I was informed the members would like to see how to dig and divide peonies. So back to the video tape files I went. Incidentally, my time limit was increased to forty minutes.

On February 9, 1998, I drove to the hosting club member's house in Russia, Ohio, which is about four miles from Versailles, with my finished tape and a box full of live peony seedlings, many in full leaf. Needless to say, the seedlings were a big hit. Many casual peony growers had never seen peony seeds, much less realize they can be propagated in that manner. The blooms were brilliant on the big screen TV in the host's basement recreation room.

I showed a seedling of **Mlokosewitschi**, which had bloomed for the first time in 1997, after an approximate ten-year wait. They were amazed at my patience, and so was I. The only other peony from my garden was a single (fernleaf foliage) *tenuifolia*.

After the forty-minute tape, I opened the floor for questions. Suddenly, the club members had plenty of time. My part of the meeting ended a little after 9:00 p.m., an hour-and-a-half after the meeting started.

The club members were extended an invitation to the National Show near Minneapolis in 1998, and to view my gardens in late May. They also invited me to host a seminar in the future on how to prepare blooms for exhibiting at peony shows.

I gave them my peony seeds and explained when and how to plant them. I also gave them some of the seedlings with no guarantee they would ever grow or bloom, since they were dug in the winter.

As a peony grower for nearly forty years, it gives me great pleasure to pass along peony information to other prospective peony gardeners.



(Gus Sindt is retiring from the Board of Directors this June because of health conditions. He has been a very active member in the Society, holding all positions. He was one of the main exhibitors [for over 30 years] of peonies at the National Shows, for all of these years. He was given a life-time appointment for judging seedlings. He has always written timely articles for the Bulletin, and is a strong advocate in selecting peonies while in bloom, for Fall planting.)

SELECTING PEONIES

W. G. Sindt, St. Paul, Minnesota

The time to select new peonies for planting this Fall is now. May and June are the months when selection should be made, because it is the time when the plants are in bloom. Seeing the actual flower on a plant is by far the best means to help one make decisions on what varieties to obtain. If one cannot go to Nurseries or gardens where the peonies are growing, the next best choice is to attend shows where the blooms can be seen, and talk to the exhibitors to learn something about the characteristics of the plant. Failing either of these two methods, the method of peony catalogs can be pursued. The descriptions given are accurate, but words and pictures are never as good as seeing the real growing plant.

In making selections, one should keep in mind the ultimate use or purpose desired for the plant. If the peonies are being selected primarily for landscape, the appearance of the plant becomes very important. The blooms are open two weeks but the shrub is there for six months. There is a great difference in plant habit. Some are very

tall, some have coarse leaves, some turn color in the Fall. By seeing the actual plant growing, a selection can be made of an attractive shrub with the flowers as a bonus. If the use is cut flowers for the home, one should look for the smaller-sized doubles, singles, and Japanese. For this purpose, hybrids are very popular because of their different and brilliant colors. For show or exhibit, one selects for perfection of bloom only. It matters little if the plant is not attractive or if the stems are too long to support the huge blooms. The show floor is the place to select this type. Look to the Court of Honor and blue ribbons at shows, and talk to the successful exhibitors. Whatever the intended use, it is interesting to try a tree peony or two. Here one can get true yellow color which is not available in any of the other types yet.

Any discussion on selection of peonies should include some varieties that have special merit. Any list of varieties, which always omit many excellent ones, is the author's favorites which have done well for him. The varieties presented here fall into that category, and while they are suggested for one of the three purposes mentioned before, they generally are acceptable in more than just one. **Vanity**, a blush Japanese, has very bright green shiny foliage and is a beautiful shrub during off-season. With **Wilford Johnson**, a full double deep pink, the top of the bush is covered with bloom, a beautiful shrub. Fern leaf (*P. tenuifolia*) has finely divided foliage that is unusual with very early bloom.

There is a single and double form of *P. tenuifolia*, with the double a very showy plant early in the season. Most of the singles, Japanese, and hybrids stand up well, and are very acceptable for landscape work. Used as cut flowers in the home or in artistic exhibits, the color of hybrids is outstanding. **Cytharea**, a semi-double shell pink hybrid; **Flame**, a bright red hybrid; **Camellia**, a blush-white hybrid formed like a camellia flower; **John Harvard**, a very dark red hybrid; **Krinkled White**, a white single; **Walter Faxon**, medium pink double; **Ruth Elizabeth**, a bright red medium-sized double; and **John Gardener**, a red Japanese with gold edges, are a few good choices for arrangers. Varieties selected for show should be large ones with good form that have the potential to be consistent winners. Some good varieties are: **Douglas Brand**, red double; **Red Charm**, full double red hybrid; **Princess Margaret**, dark pink double; **Pico**, white single; **Dinner Plate**, pink double; **Miss America**, semi-double white; **Frances Mains**, light pink double; **Kansas**, double light red; and many, many more. For a real stopper try a yellow tree peony such as **Age of Gold** or **Roman Gold**.

The preceding selection of varieties is very limited. The cost will be in the range of \$15.00 to \$25.00, with perhaps one exception. While this may seem high to some people, it compares very favorably with the cost of annual bedding plants. Packs of petunias now are

about \$1.75 or perhaps \$2.00 for eight or ten plants. Several packs are needed and they must be replaced each year, while the peony lasts a lifetime.

The National Exhibit at Northtown in Minnesota will be an excellent opportunity to see peonies on the show tables.

When peonies are purchased, they should be obtained from a specialist, one who knows and grows hundreds of varieties. A peony plant lasts a lifetime, so select carefully!

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HOBBY BLOSSOMS INTO WORLD RENOWN

Kalamazoo, Michigan Gazette

Reprinted with permission.

COOPER—First, the plants must be cultivated and brought to healthy bloom.

Then the tinkering begins—mixing this variety with that, and carefully gathering the seed that results.

The seedlings are nurtured for years until they finally bloom.

Then the plants may produce pretty flowers, but they may not possess the unique color or property to make them worth introducing as a new variety. In that case, all the time and effort goes for naught.

Welcome to the joys of plant hybridization. The joys that have been pursued for years by Peter Christopher Laning.

Laning's hobby has been anything but for naught. He has earned the respect of fellow gardeners around the world, as well as the highest honor bestowed in the world of peonies, the A. P. Saunders award.

Last year, one of Laning's creations was named Grand Champion at the American Peony Society show in Ontario. Others of Laning's varieties have become favorites of growers here, and in Europe as well.

Laning, 79, got his first taste of working the soil as a 12-year-old in the muck fields of Kalamazoo's celery farms. He enjoyed growing things even then, and continued to garden, preferring flowers to vegetables.

In 1970, Laning decided it was time to take his hobby one step further by developing his own flower varieties.

He considered lilies, day lilies and irises, but after careful research he decided he would concentrate his efforts on peonies, those old-fashioned favorites that bloom early each Summer with flowers as large and heavy as small cabbages. Peonies are resistant to disease, and not as many varieties of them had yet been developed, Laning reasoned.

He ordered \$150 worth of plants from the Nursery of Professor A. P. Saunders [a renowned peony breeder], and his work began.

"The first season the plants either die or prosper. All of mine prospered," Laning said.

Then he waited, four years and longer, until the plants began to bear flowers and to produce seed. The first seedlings were planted on Laning's home lot on West F Avenue south of Cooper; but before long his work expanded to the farm of his wife's sister on the corner of G Ave. and 6th Street.

In 1986, the Lanings purchased 10 more acres at the corner of Douglas and F Avenue, and it is there that his best plants grow now, blooming from late May to early July.

Sunny Boy and **Sunny Girl**, two of his introductions, are loved for their full double blossoms and pale yellow color.

Old Rose Dandy is a Japanese cross between an herbaceous peony and a tree peony, and starts nearly purple, in five days turning completely yellow.

Lois's Coral is a single coral blossom, and **Lois's Choice**, a warm pink on two sides with a center strip of yellow.

"It is elegant," Laning said.

Lois Elaine Laning, last year's Grand Champion, is a red peony with a rare copper tint.

Laning would be content to confine his work to the garden, looking forward each season to new creations.

"It's always exciting. They're like children," he said.

But a part of the work also requires complying with the inspections and paper work that allow him to share his plants with gardeners all around the world.

And while his work isn't well known to those outside of gardening circles, it is certainly appreciated by flower enthusiasts.

"He is very well known, one of the foremost hybridizers in the U.S.," said Leila Bradfield, who serves with Laning on the Executive Board of the Peony Society, and is a member of the Iris Society as well.

"Those who know anything about gardening know about him," she said.

Laning's peony gardens are a favorite Summer destination for gardeners who tour when plants are in bloom, and pick out those they would like to purchase.

"They put their name, address, and telephone number on the plant they want, and he digs in the Fall and sells them for \$10, which is peanuts. Some of the plants would normally retail for \$50 or more," she said.

Although he is too modest to mention it, Laning is also "the Johnny Appleseed of the peony world," sending seeds all over America and Europe, and Australia as well.

These sorts of activities and services earned him the coveted Saunders Award, which is given to only very few people who have done outstanding work in peonies.

Laning said Michigan provides a great climate for peonies, and established beds often outlast the houses they once complimented. They require full sun, but soil types in Michigan are usually suitable. There is adequate rainfall, and Summers are generally moderate.

"El Nino has been very good to us," Laning said.

Although most people are familiar with the huge, pink old-fashioned varieties, peonies actually come in a wide range of colors, petal configuration, and even blooming time. By combining varieties, it is possible to have peonies blooming from mid-May to July, though late May is the usual time for the annual blossom.

Each flower lasts about five days, and plants bloom over a period of two weeks. Peonies make wonderful cut flowers as well, particularly smaller, newer varieties that aren't as top-heavy as their predecessors.

Those smaller varieties in newer colors are among Laning's personal favorites, and as peonies grow in popularity he's hoping other gardeners will learn to appreciate those attributes as well.

Family members share his enthusiasm for peonies. Several of his creations are named in honor of his wife, Lois, and Laning's granddaughter, Shontel Laning, sells cut flowers at the farmer's market in Kalamazoo. His grandson, Jonathan, helps with some of the garden work now, and Laning is hopeful Jonathan will someday "pick up where I leave off."

"When the gardener dies, the garden dies. That's why I hope my grandson takes over," Laning said.

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My best peony in 1997 was **Madylone**, easily! Some of the others that were excellent were: **LeCygne**, **Dolorodell**, and **Mothers Choice**, but none of them really approached **Madylone** in form, color, size or stem. It had the eye appeal, too—with the "Oh's" and "Ah's", and requests for information about it. Otherwise, 1997 was below average for the peonies. My largest planting needs much work, including moving of many varieties, Last Fall I did a few including **Paul Bunyan**, **Therese**, **M. Jules Elie** and **Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt**.

Many thanks for your dedicated service to the American Peony Society. Your contributions to the Society and to the peony have been tremendous. Again, many thanks, and have a great year.

—Sincerely, Leslie J. Wiley, Cobleskill, NY

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***If you cut a tree, plant a tree.
It is nature's replaceable energy.***

95TH YEAR—AMERICAN PEONY SOCIETY

Greta Kessenich

February 18, 1903, a meeting was called in Brooklyn, New York, for the purpose of completing the temporary organization of the American Peony Society. A permanent organization was completed. Mr. Frank Lown of Ploughkeepsie, New York, a lawyer, drew up the Articles of Incorporation. The Society was incorporated under the laws of New York, and on July 2, 1904 officers were elected as permanent officials.

It is not known when the first peony was grown in the United States, but in 1806 McMahon lists five kinds in his list of perennials: *P. officinalis*, *albiflora*, *laciniata*, *hybrida* and *tenifolia*. Continuing, Mr. Prince in 1828 imported every possible kind from Europe. He describes **Whitleye**, **Humei** and **Fragrans**. At that time, he had 40 varieties in his garden.

In 1862, at great expense, he obtained 20 varieties of tree peonies from European gardens and introduced them in Flushing, Long Island.

In 1856, Mr. H. A. Terry of Crescent, Iowa, obtained from Prince, at Flushing, Long Island, some 30 varieties. All produced seed were planted, and soon Mr. Terry had thousands of seedlings. He dealt only with the herbaceous and has done a great deal to advance the culture of peonies in the West. Some of his best were **Grover Cleveland**, **Carrie**, **Esther**, **Mrs. Peas**, **Maud Hutchinson**, and **Morning Star**.

Mr. Richardson of Dorchester, Massachusetts has done much to advance the interest of peonies in America. Records of his peony garden go back to 1857.

—From J. Eliot Coit, Cornell University
Bulletin #259, November 1905

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From John Wister's book, *The Peonies*, it states that the finest varieties, with the exception of Richardson, came here before 1900 from the great producers from France: Calot, Crousse, The Lemoines, Dessert, and the English producers: The Kelways—father and son.

With the formation of the American Peony Society, new varieties began to appear. In the 1927 Fall catalog of Good and Welsh Peony Farm, Springfield, Ohio, it states that 85 acres of peonies are growing near Springfield, with more than one-thousand varieties with every color imaginable from purest white to deep maroon. Every year "millions of buds unfold." Peonies listed in their catalog are priced from \$1.00 to \$1.50 per division.

Peonies were on the increase, and so were peony Nurseries. In *Bulletin* #110, in 1948, Gilbert H. Wild and Son, Sarcoxie, Missouri, advertised 135 acres of peonies. Each year 60,000 dozen of peonies

were shipped for Decoration Day. (This Nursery since 1885).

Charles Klehm and Son of Illinois were a very large producer of cut peonies. (Their Nursery since 1852). A Charter Member of the American Peony Society.

Brands Peony Farm of Faribault, Minnesota was established in 1868, and is Minnesota's oldest Nursery. The Rice Co. Historical Society records state that in 1935 the Brand Peony Farm of Faribault, Minnesota expects the peonies and lilacs to be in bloom, beginning June 11! With fifty acres of peonies and 100,000 French Lilacs in bloom, it is again expected to attract thousands of visitors.

Other peony ads in the *Bulletin* were Myron Bigger of Topeka, Kansas, C. F. Wassenburg of Van Wert, Ohio, William H. Krekler of Somerville, Ohio with 1300 varieties. Cherry Hill Nursery in West Newberry, Massachusetts, and one tree peony ad [*Lutea* and *Japanese*] by Louis Smirnow.

Advertising continued—*Bulletin* #169—E. H. Lins of Cologne, Minnesota, and Arthur L. Marawska of River Grove, Illinois. Both were hybridizers, and produced some of the greatest peonies we still have today.

One of the great producers of peonies was the Sass Brothers of Omaha, Nebraska. On the south side of Minneapolis, A. B. Franklin had forty acres of blooming peonies. He grew about 50,000 seedlings. Land was cleared for many more future cut flowers. From the Franklin Nursery came great peonies: **Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Bonanza, Charm, Minuet**, and many others.

Ernest Flint Kelsey of Tri-terrace Gardens, New York, was a talented hybridizer with a long list of peonies with the highest ratings: **Ruth Clay, Marilla Beauty, and Noel**. Mrs. Mary Freeborn of Proctor, Vermont produced beautiful peonies in hybrids.

Lyman Glasscock of Illinois produced hybrids, with **Red Charm** leading the way. Edward Auten produced **John Harvard, Do Tell** and **Gay Paree** with his long list of wonderful peonies, and from our renowned hybridizer, Prof. A. P. Saunders, with peonies of magnificence.

There are so many more men and women that have contributed to this influx of early peony growing in the United States. See John Wister's book, *The Peonies*, for a complete listing.

Hybridizers had long been trying to achieve a good, bright yellow herbaceous peony. A successful cross was made in Japan, in the Nursery of Toichi Itoh, that produced such a peony—a good yellow and an herbaceous plant.

Louis Smirnow of New York made this discovery on one of his trips to Japan. He brought to the United States in 1967, four good yellow herbaceous peonies, and the successful cross.

American hybridizers have successfully duplicated the cross: herbaceous x tree. Not only the yellow color [that was the ultimate

goal], but many other exquisite colors, with and without flares, which are now in commerce.

In the summarizing of peonies in the new *Check List* book, Mr. Donald R. Smith, 45 Exeter St., W. Newton, MA 02165, Editor of the newsletter for hybridizers, states that 31 different varieties of this herbaceous peony are growing in the United States.

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1905 PEONY MANUAL OF C. S. HARRISON, YORK, NEBRASKA

VARIATIONS FROM SOIL AND CLIMATE

These plants have their preferences of location and do much better in some places than in others. Some apples that do well in the east are worthless in the west. Many things that are favorites of one state are condemned in another. Though these flowers have a wide adaptation to all our northern states, some of them have their preferences. **Charlemagne** is highly spoken of in Rochester, N. Y., but is not a favorite in New England or Nebraska. **Giganthea** will do well in the east, but I never, in five years, secured a bloom from it. **Mrs. Pleas** sent out a glorious single peony which she claimed that in Indiana had flowers nine inches across, but in six years I never got a bloom of any kind from it. Yet, I could not doubt her word.

Peonies bloom earlier in Nebraska than in Massachusetts. In 1906, when the national show was held in Boston, we had an opportunity to see the same sorts bloom in both states. Invariably, most kinds were of lighter color in the drier air of Nebraska than in the moister air of Massachusetts. In the cooler air of Minnesota and Manitoba they have a deeper, richer color, than 500 miles to the south. There is a great difference between the atmosphere of the Atlantic states, which carry 90 degrees of moisture, and that of the trans-Missouri states, which generally register only 55 to 60, and yet this hardy flower thrives under both conditions.

Again, some seasons there will be striking variations. There are off-years with flowers as with fruits. Some years the same sorts will have inferior blossoms, and the next season they will be overwhelming with beauty. The choicest, great, double ones have such full flowers that, like the **viburnum sterilis**, they cannot bear seed, and yet sometimes such full-orbed ones as **Floral Treasure**, **Festiva Maxima** and **La Tulipe** will have smaller and thinner blooms, so they can, in rare instances, produce seeds. But this is at the expense of the flower.

A gentleman said to a florist, "This year I had such exquisite flowers from one of my varieties I wanted you to see them." The next year he was ashamed of them and did not call around for the florist. Generally, **La Tulipe** is one of the most attractive flowers, but the summer of 1906 I failed to find a good specimen, either in Nebraska or Massachusetts.

—*Charter Member of the American Peony Society*

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BACK HOME—DULUTH, MINNESOTA

February 19, 1998

Our family held a funeral for my father last week. Dad fought cancer for many years, yet lived to see 70. To the end, he planned his spring garden, all the time keeping his spirits high despite his illness. He taught me the conscience ways of proper gardening, and that patience is rewarded in the growing of peonies.

As a boy, my Dad sold peony blooms on the streets of his hometown of Duluth, Minnesota. He enjoyed the annual peddling of the beautiful flowers on the hilly streets of Duluth. His eyes would shine when he spoke of how people would stop in their tracks to admire his peonies. This was during a time in America when children worked long hours to help support their families—a time when the cultivation of beauty was secondary to the hard pursuit of the American Dream. Nevertheless, even the most hurried passersby would stop to enjoy the fragrance of the peony blooms.

More than thirty years later, while clearing some overgrown brush, he and my mother salvaged a long-forgotten peony from our far backyard. He had let the area go wild not long after planting it. This variety, similar to **Felix Crousse**, was Dad's fragrant favorite from his days of selling on the streets. Together, my parents carefully separated the peony from the weeds, divided, and replanted the neglected plant in the garden closest to our house. Dad enjoyed such gardening projects and the peony thrived on the compost they fed it.

When my Dad noted how I admired his peony in full bloom, he later generously traded me a large division for one of my own. It brings me much happiness to know that he lived to see his favorite peony blooming in my garden, and mine in his. How I cherish his peony over all of the others! This Father's Day, Dad's ashes will be returned to the soil of his childhood, to Duluth. He will come full circle. Dad will be back to the place where peonies played a role in his development and now in mine.

—Steve Johnson, APS Life Member



MEMORIAL

The American Peony Society received a memorial from Steve and Margaret Johnson in memory of Bob Johnson of Minnetonka, MN. Bob was an avid, lifetime gardener who enjoyed growing peonies. He was a senior high school teacher and swimming coach. Among his many accomplishments, Bob made it his goal to see that every student knew how to swim prior to graduation, including the handicapped and blind students. He is dearly missed by family and friends.

PAEONIA EMODI

Galen Burrell, P.O. Box 754, Ridgefield, Washington 98642

Wild peonies have a tendency to grow in some of the most beautiful places in the world. But of all the peony species, *Paeonia emodi*'s range encompasses what I consider to be the most spectacular scenery found anywhere on earth. *P. emodi* is widely distributed from Northern Pakistan to Northwest India (Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh) to Western Nepal with one known location in Southwestern Tibet. Here *P. emodi* grows in valleys and on hillsides between 6000-8000 feet along the West slope of the Himalayan Mountains.

This stately, white-flowered peony species grows in a number of different habitats, from open, fern forests (in India) to rocky crevices in open pine woodlands (Pakistan). Plants of *Paeonia emodi* that grow among ferns can be greater than five feet in height, while plants growing in the drier pine woodlands are two to three feet tall. I suspect there are quite a few other differences in populations of *Paeonia emodi* growing in these remote Himalayan valleys, but so far the only difference that has been quantified is that some populations of plants have glabrous rather than hairy carpels. These plants have been named *Paeonia emodi* forma *glabrata*.

(In the past four years, I have received seed of *Paeonia emodi* collected from the Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Northern Pakistan. I am extremely hopeful that when these plants grow to maturity I will be able to describe the similarities and differences of *P. emodi* from these three locations.)

Paeonia emodi is in many ways similar to *Paeonia lactiflora*. Like *P. lactiflora* it has white, fragrant flowers, 2-3 flowers per stem, and long leaflets, although its leaflets are longer than those of *P. lactiflora*; to me they resemble a giant hand. *Paeonia emodi* is also larger in all respects than *P. lactiflora*. Unlike *P. lactiflora* it usually only has one carpel. (For a fairly good photograph of *P. emodi* see Perennials Volume 1, by Roger Phillips and Martyn Rix. There is also a good photograph taken at the Geneva Botanical Garden by Leo Fernig in Allan Roger's book, Peonies.)

Not surprisingly, recent evolutionary evidence presented by Dr. Tao Sang in his PhD dissertation suggests that *Paeonia emodi* is a product of reticulate evolution—being the diploid, hybrid progeny of *Paeonia lactiflora* and *Paeonia veitchii*.

F. C. Stern in his book, A Study of the Genus Paeonia, suggests that *P. emodi* is not hardy throughout England. I doubt that this statement is correct as *P. emodi* plants have been grown in New England and the Upper Midwest. Professor A. P. Saunders, writing in the Dec. 1931 American Peony Society *Bulletin* says: "***I feel convinced, therefore, the plant (P. emodi) withstands the winter***

well, and that Major Stern's difficulties with it must have some other origin." In my own garden, it has weathered temperatures of 0 degrees F and wind chill temperatures of -15 degrees F with no ill effects.

Stern also says that *P. emodi* grows best among shrubs to protect it from early morning sun. One of my largest plants is grown in full sun on a west facing slope. Plants of *P. emodi* at the Geneva Botanical Garden are also grown in full sun with a little bit of early morning shade. A few plants that I tried to grow in fairly dense shade grew fairly well, but they never did flower.

From my own experiences I would give the cultural requirements of *Paeonia emodi* to be full sun to partial shade in a well drained sandy-loam soil. *P. emodi* can also be grown in clay-loam soils as long as drainage is very good.

Of all the species peonies, *Paeonia emodi* is one of the best for growing in a large pot. It will not get as big in a container, but if grown well it will still be gorgeous.

Paeonia emodi has rarely been used to produce hybrid peonies. Professor A. P. Saunders found it unwilling to cross with *Paeonia lactiflora*. He did, however, produce a few hybrids from this cross—one of which is the beautiful hybrid "**White Innocence**." Professor Saunders also successfully crossed *P. emodi* with *P. veitchii* to produce the hybrid peony "**Early Windflower**" and with *P. berezowskii* (*P. veitchii* var. *berezowskii*) to produce "**Late Windflower**."

My own attempts at crossing *P. emodi* with *P. veitchii* have produced two beautiful hybrid peonies. One has soft pink flowers and the other white flowers with foliage like *P. veitchii*. Last year I also successfully crossed *P. emodi* with *P. sterniana*. This year I will try further crosses with *Paeonia emodi*.

Professor Saunders called *P. emodi* "one of the finest wild peonies." In my opinion, it is one of the finest of all peonies.



LINWOOD TREE PEONY FESTIVAL

We invite you to enjoy the Tree Peonies in bloom in the Linwood Gardens. Open to the public May 30 - 31, & June 6 - 7, 9am to 5pm; Japanese Varieties, Saunders Hybrids, Gratwick Introductions, Daphnis Hybrids.

Lee Gratwick and Nassos Daphnis from Rochester, New York.

GROWING TREE PEONIES FROM SEED

By Harvey F. Stoke, Roanoke, Virginia (from previous *Bulletin*)

As an amateur grower of tree peonies for many years, I still find it surprising that this magnificent flowering shrub is so little known and grown by the average gardener. The huge blossoms of many colors, shades, and textures lend spectacular beauty to any garden, making the plant worthy of far greater use.

Perhaps the chief cause of the delayed acceptance of the tree peony, *Paeonia suffruticosa*, by the American gardeners, is the lack of information as to its cultural requirements. Another factor is probably our characteristic demand for immediate results, for the propagation of blossoming specimens of the tree peony takes considerable time, making them expensive. Tree peonies are for patient people.

A native of interior Asia, under natural conditions, the plant was a woods undergrowth. Selections have been made and propagated by the Chinese for so many centuries that the identity of the wild native plant, now almost extinct, has been all but lost.

Many generations of cross-pollination and inter-breeding have made the seedlings, even of the named varieties, highly variable in color and type, ranging from pure white to deep maroon and purple, and from singles with their golden stamens to doubles so full that neither stamens or pistils are visible.

The Chinese, whose art and literature concerning the tree peony date back to the sixth century A.D., stressed full doubles in their variety selections. The Japanese, whose period of culture has been somewhat less, appear to favor singles and semi-doubles.

Owing to the great variability of seedlings, the characteristics of the named varieties have been fixed by asexual propagation, which includes grafting, layering, and division.

I shall not here enter into the details of asexual propagation, the techniques of which call for skills and training not to be expected of the casual grower. Rather, I think it is more interesting to invite the reader to the high adventure of growing the unpredictable seedlings, in the area from which the named varieties have been selected. The long period of waiting between the planting of the seed and the unfolding of the flower only accentuates the keenness of anticipation and the climax of satisfaction when one views for the first time a blossom of unique loveliness, the exact likeness of which has never before been seen by the eyes of man.

Tree peonies begin blossoming several weeks in advance of herbaceous peonies of the same district. Here, in the upper South, the season begins in the later part of April, ranging northward through May to June. Coincidentally the ripening of the seed occurs in August in southwest Virginia and correspondingly later in the North.

My first attempt at growing tree peonies was with seed imported

from Japan. These I planted early in the Spring of 1932 but none came up until a year later, a result that can always be expected from dry seed. The seed, hard, black and shining and the size of garden peas, are best gathered as soon as the pods open and while they still retain their pristine moisture. Never let them dry out. Immediate planting is satisfactory if one takes the pains to provide suitable soil, shade, and vigilant care to see that the soil and seeds do not become too dry at any time before the advent of Winter.

My personal preference is immediately to place the seeds in sphagnum, peat moss, or vermiculite, and store in moderate temperatures until sprouting begins, a period of about two months. The seed can then be planted, either in a cold frame or out-of-doors.

The seed of the tree peony has this peculiarity: after the sprouting root appears it definitely will not develop a top until the sprouted seed has passed through a cool or cold "incubation" period of several months. This fact has been demonstrated and scientifically established by the Boyce Thompson Institute. Under natural conditions, the acorn of the oak and the nut of the chestnut exhibit similar characteristics, anchoring themselves to the soil by the sprouting root, beneath fallen leaves, and developing the top when they emerge in the Spring.

Planting, whether Fall or the following Spring, should always be shallow, with the seed scarcely more than an inch below the surface. Like the bean and pea, the cotyledons formed by the division of the seed, will rise above the surface, releasing the tender top from the interference of the hard soil. A high humus content and sand used in the soil covering the seed will help prevent baking and hardening. Mulching is helpful in Fall planting, but the mulch should be removed early in the Spring, for the little plants are early risers.

In the first year, the plants will develop from one to three leaves. When these fall in Autumn, the plant will scarcely show above ground. Winter mulching is desirable during the following few years to prevent the heaving, due to alternate freezing and thawing, from tearing the tender roots of the young plants.

Plants may be spaced a foot apart in the row and left thus until they reach blossoming stage, which takes five or more years. They should then be moved to permanent locations, spaced not less than four feet apart.

Tree peonies do best in deep fertile soil with a high humus content and good drainage. Unlike the herbaceous peony, they do best in partial shade, especially in the upper South and the middle West. The usual height of a mature plant under favorable conditions is from three to five feet, with an equal or greater spread. The older stalks age, and after ten to twenty years are best removed to give place to abundant new shoots. Under congenial conditions plants are known to survive a hundred years.

NEW MEMORIES

by R. Kennard Baker

Edited and reprinted from Cricket Hill's "Peony Heaven."

Memories of pink and white fluff ball's in my grandfather's garden when I was age four started, for me, what has become an obsession that surely many of us share. It was a time when the world seemed perfect—when picking raspberries, going to the iris farm, stopping to buy local melons on the way home from the beach, and waiting for a roast beef Sunday dinner was what was important in life—the smell of those peonies—as tall as I in their great garden clumps and so fragrant in grandmother's huge chinese vase.

Well, I was only four. Now at fifty-four I choose to leave those childhood memories in tact and make new ones. Ten years ago I started taking back pieces of the woods that surrounded the house here in Connecticut. Bed by bed, year by year, friends and I have managed to wind twenty-five garden beds around the rock and ledge, up a rather steep slope, and along the plateau looking down over all the rest. All for the love of peonies! The varieties number just over 400 now and new beds have been prepared for planting this fall to bring the collection on another hundred or so. Why not?

The tree peonies slightly outnumber the herbaceous—and there are intersectionals—no discrimination here! Don't you think it's worth having all—each for its own strength and character.

Nursery sources currently represented include: Callies Beaux Jardins, for the intersectionals; Caprice, as a result of reading Allan Rogers' book; Cricket Hill, for unbelievable Chinese specimens; Klehm, for some of the newer herbaceous hybrids; Reath, for a large and varied stock of tree and herbaceous; Riviere (more to follow); and Wild, for many of the classics. And I've begun to sample some others.

Last spring on an already scheduled trip to visit friends in Vence, France, I visited the Riviere Pivoinerie in Crest, France. It was quite an adventure, but the short of it is I wound up with thirty new peonies that were previously unknown to me (some hybridized by Mr. Riviere, his father, and grandfather). They were shipped and received bare rooted in the fall and now compose an entire bed on the edge of my plateau rather unimaginatively labeled "Crest."

I label (a neighbor hand paints the signs) all gardens after one silly thing or another. Some include: Strawberry Patch, Log Pile, Weeping Cherry, Cactus, Barn View, Five Cedars, Pointed Rock, etc. I am planning a trip to Kelway Nursery/Gardens in Somerset, England to do much the same thing; that is, discover peonies, both tree and herbaceous not readily available here in the states, and whenever possible, hybridized by my host. I have thirty (three ft. x three ft.) holes already dug, composted and set aside for these treasures.

On the subject of preparation while waiting for fall arrival of the tuber's, it's been my experience, despite everything written, that I need nearly six feet of space (center to center) between plants. If less, within several years they are crowding each other. Therefore my holes are dug to that measurement, soil enriched with homemade

compost, (I ask guests to bring vegetable scraps and leave their wine and gifts at home), and small wire fences placed around each prepared and slightly mounded spot. The little barriers help dissuade animals, household or other, and two-bourboned admirers from walking on young shoots. A cup or so of Plantone and some fireplace ashes is all I've ever used for food. One reads of other solutions, but this seems to work here.

During the fall of my second year of planting peonies, my mother suggested that perhaps I'd like to try and revive a plant that her father had given to her some fifty years ago and that hadn't bloomed in more than twenty. Too much shade she thought. Well, a free peony and with some history to boot—I was game. So I went back home and dug it up. Could it be that this unnamed pink fluff now happy here, and each spring producing in excess of twenty blooms, is one of those exact plants I walked among as a child? It must be! And even though it has lots of fancy neighbors with pedigrees and international backgrounds, it remains one of my favorites, and is really the foundation of the rest of all this wonderful madness.

Some dear yet smug friends used to ask what I did with my time—wasn't I bored lost in the woods in Connecticut? My somewhat pat reply has become: "Between planning, ordering, preparing planting, transplanting, fertilizing, mulching, labeling, tying-up, covering, uncovering, weeding, photographing, journalizing, dead heading, and pruning—my peonies—I stay busy—and happy, thank you.

Fifty Favorites

<u>Tree</u>	<u>Herbaceous</u>
Anna Marie	America
Asahi No Sora	Athena
Black Pirate	Camellia
Canary	Carol
Chinese Dragon	Chocolate Soldier
Companion of Serenity	Coral Charm
Coronal	Cytheria
Corsair	Daystar
Ezra Pound	Do Tell
Gauguin	Early Windflower
Gessekai	Flame
Golden Mandarin	Friendship
Green Dragon Lying in a Dark Pool	Garden Peace
Guardian of the Monastery	Garden Treasure *
Imitation of a Lotus Flower	Goldilocks
Kamada Fugi	Kelway's Glorious
Kronos	Krinkled White
Leda	Ludovica
Marchioness	May Music
Number One Scholar's Red	Nosegay
Redon	Pink Hawaiian Coral
Sunrise	Red Charm
Teni	Soft Salmon Saucer
The Captain's Concubine	White Innocence
Zephyrus	Yellow Dream

* Intersectional

PEONY ROOTS

Edward Auten, Jr., Princeville, Illinois

Yes, peony roots, that's what they are, not bulbs, as they are so often called.

A top size bulb is ordinarily a complete unit, already fully loaded, if dug in the Fall, for next season's top bloom. While a standard three to five peony root division is only a fraction of a large mature plant, it will require several years to reach satisfactory size. I compare a peony division more with a three-foot grafted apple tree than with any bulb, for the peony may very well outlive the apple tree, and most bulbs will come to maturity and split up into smaller bulbs in a very few years.

Not all small peony divisions sent by dealers are unfair to the receiver. Peony plants vary greatly in size, and small varieties are very apt to have smaller roots than the larger plants. A standard division from a small peony might not be over half the size of one from a large rooted variety.

People who are used to divisions with long untrimmed roots, may get more bloom the first two years than from the same kind with roots trimmed to the standard length of 3 or 4 inches from the crown material. But maybe they do not know that the tendency for these long roots is to enlarge, instead of sending out more new roots from the crown, which the latter is the best way to get a new well-formed root system good for long life.

From long experience and from preference, I have planted many more small divisions than the standard three-to-five-eye ones. But I never plant long untrimmed roots. Some of the *officinalis* hybrids have comparatively short roots, and may not need shortening.

My idea of the ideal planting division is for one with one or two roots growing out of crown material, which has one or more eyes, with the roots feeding directly into the crown material—no cross cut dividing. Then if there is any decay in the crown it should be opened up, cleaned out, and just before planting, soaked for ten minutes in solution of 38% formaldehyde solution, one pint to 40 gallons of water. Then dried in open air and planted immediately. It is not always possible to clean out a large division completely. With a small division, one has the start of a fine, well balanced mature plant.

Roots dug in the middle of August are fairly stiff, and the new eyes not much more than round knobs. I never let them stand until the roots are limp, but divide immediately. As the season progresses, the new eyes lengthen and the roots get more and more brittle. I prefer to do all digging by October 15th. By that time the eyes may be three-fourths of an inch long, or more. But we do dig until mid-November, and never in the Spring. In the Spring, it is almost impossible to dig a large plant without breakage, and the roots are in

no shape to stand the trials of their first season in a new location. For dividing roots I use, even on largest clumps, a knife with a 4-1/2 inch blade about 1 inch wide, and NOT stainless steel. Such knives are almost impossible to buy now. They used to be available everywhere for 25 cents apiece.

I do not like to divide a two-year root, nor to plant a one-year whole plant. They are softer than older roots, and can't stand as many unfavorable conditions. Of course, young roots can be handled with special care, such as ideal watering, some shade, maybe; high fertility, careful spraying. Beside all this, it is usually bad business to divide a two-year root, as the increase the third year should be much faster than the first two.

Variation in size of roots cannot be classified as to species, form, or color of bloom. Some of my *officinalis* hybrids have very slender roots. The largest rooted peony I have is hybrid **Veritas**. The Jap varieties which came from Japan have many different sizes of roots. Some are almost woody and slow growers. **Mikado** has a medium-sized root, and is ideal for dividing. Size of roots among the white *lactiflora* kinds can vary greatly in different kinds.

Some of the Jap kinds from Japan will throw out new eyes and stalks from the side of a root, with no crown material attached. Some **Mikado** seedlings with other blood in them, will also throw out eyes from pieces of root. **El Capitan** does that, a seedling of **Mikado**. Some Jap kinds, soon after digging, will have a long root split maybe an eighth of an inch deep, lengthwise of the roots. But for some reason, these almost never start to decay, but heal over nicely.

The resistance to decay of roots varies greatly in different kinds. And there are several kinds of decay. Some infect the whole root, others merely eat into it. If planting seed, use that from kinds with vigorous roots and resistance to decay. Breed desired color into good roots.

★ ★ ★ ★

TO SUCCEED WITH PEONIES

When you receive your shipment of root divisions you will find that they are ready for planting. No trimming or pruning is necessary.

A peony division is nothing more nor less than a well developed root system with from three to five eyes or buds on the crown. When planting, it is important to remember that the division should be placed in the ground so that the eyes are covered by an inch-and-a-half or two inches of soil. Do not make the mistake of planting too deep. Two inches is deep enough.

If the plants need fertilizer, use a small amount of bonemeal around each plant in the fall of the year.

At blooming time when the buds become soft and fluffy, cut some of them and let them open in the house. Many varieties will keep for ten days if cut when the buds are opening.

EVERY PEONY GROWER SHOULD KNOW

If you wish a clean garden, continue to cultivate [though it is not necessary for the benefit of the peony] after August 1. Do not go deeper than one inch. Water thoroughly every week or ten days if the ground is dry and if the plants show signs of wilting. A sprinkling does no good.

Do not be disturbed if OFFICINALIS and hybrids reach maturity at an early date. The fern leaf dies to the ground very early. Do not disturb it.

Begin your spray program in the spring, when you see the tips of the eyes. It is too late to spray for the disease of the leaves later in the season.

Do not cut your plants to the ground until late in the season, the last of September, October, and November.

Mulch your newly-planted peony roots in the fall. Peonies do not have the opportunity to anchor themselves, so when freezing and thawing comes in the very early spring, they are apt to be heaved out of the ground. This could occur to established plants as well. Mulch material ranges from marsh hay or any material that will hold the frost in the ground until the temperature gradually maintains normal degrees. If heaving takes place in your peony beds, replant the plants immediately.

Average garden soil, well drained, with a generous amount of humus suits the tree peony.

In the early spring, fertilize them lightly with a complete fertilizer.

A good mulch will conserve moisture. Spray early, just as the plants are starting to grow; also the ground around them, using a good fungicide.

Plant the tree peony in a permanent location. Do not move it unless it is absolutely necessary.

Peonies do not require ants to open the peony bud! They appear on the plants when the buds are growing and feed on the honey the buds exude. Beyond spreading disease, ants do no harm.

Probably the most serious menace to peonies is the damage caused by the small eel worms called nemas. They feed on the small feeding roots and make nodules on them similar to legume sacs. Sometimes these nodules look like a lot of peas on the ends of the roots when dug. They prevent the plant from getting its needed nourishments. They are found in every section of the country but are more prevalent in the south. Since four hundred or more of our common plants are host to them, they are hard to deal with. They are invisible to the naked eye. Roots planted in heavy soil are less subject to attack than those planted in other soils. Several chemicals are now available to kill these worms with no danger to the plant. See "Parasitic Root-Knot Nematode in Garden Peonies" by Don Hollingsworth, page 41 of the *Handbook of the Peony*, and also page 88 in the book, *The Best of 75 Years*, chapter 4, "Culture and Diseases."

THE GOLD MEDAL WINNERS

Since 1923 the American Peony Society has, from time to time, chosen certain varieties of peonies to receive the Society's Gold Medal for outstanding excellence and performance. During the first 20 years or so, the award was made by the Society's Seedling Committee, but since then by the Board of Directors.

Name of originator, year of introduction, and year of award are included.

MRS. A. M. BRAND (Brand, 1925), St. Paul, 1923
A. B. FRANKLIN (Franklin, 1928), Chicago, 1933
MRS. J. V. EDLUND (Edlund, 1929), Chicago, 1933
HARRY F. LITTLE (Nicholls, 1933), St. Paul, 1934
NICK SHAYLOR (Allison, 1931), Syracuse, 1941
ELSA SASS (Sass, H. P., 1930), Minneapolis, 1943
HANSINA BRAND (Brand, 1925), Rockford, 1946
GOLDEN GLOW (Glasscock, 1935), Rockford, 1946
MRS. FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (Franklin, 1933), Guelph, 1948
DORIS COOPER (Cooper, 1946), Milwaukee, 1949
RED CHARM (Glasscock, 1944), Dixon, Illinois, 1956
MISS AMERICA (J. R. Mann-Van Steen, 1936), Dixon, Illinois, 1956
KANSAS (Bigger, 1940), Grand Forks, North Dakota, 1957
MOONSTONE (Murawska, 1943), Minneapolis, 1959
MISS AMERICA (J. R. Mann-Van Steen, 1936), Minneapolis, 1971
NICK SHAYLOR (Allison, 1931), Kingwood Center, Mansfield, Ohio, 1972
AGE OF GOLD T.P. (Saunders), Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1973
WALTER MAINS (Mains, 1957), Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, 1974
BU-TE (Wassenberg, 1954), Kingwood Center, Mansfield, Ohio, 1975

Both **MISS AMERICA** and **NICK SHAYLOR** were awarded a second time because no one remembered they were already among the elite, which emphasizes their excellence.

No gold medal awarded from 1975 until 1980.

CYTHEREA (Saunders, 1953), Ithaca, New York, 1980
BOWL OF CREAM (Klehms, 1963), Kingwood Center, 1981
WESTERNER (Bigger, 1942), Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, 1982
CHINESE DRAGON (Saunders), Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1983
DOLORODELL (Lins, 1942), Kingwood Center, 1984
BURMA RUBY (Glasscock, 1951), Mahomet, Ill., 1985
CORAL CHARM (Wissing, 1964), Minneapolis, 1986
NORMA VOLZ (A. L. Volz, 1968), Kingwood Center, 1987
PAULA FAY (Fay, 1962), Chicago Botanical Gardens, 1988
HIGH NOON (Saunders, 1952 TP), Janesville, Wisconsin, 1989
SEA SHELL (Sass, 1937), Kingwood Center, 1990
WHITE CAP (Winchell 1966), Royal Botanical Gardens, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, 1991
AMERICA (Rudolph, 1956), Des Plains, Illinois, 1992
MOTHERS CHOICE (Glasscock, 1950), Chicago, 1993
SHINTENCHI (Japan—Honorary), Chicago, 1994
PILLOW TALK (Carl Klehm, 1968), Chicago, 1994
SPARKLING STAR (Bigger, 1953), Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1995
GARDEN TREASURE (Hollingsworth, 1984), Kingwood Center, Mansfield, Ohio, 1996
OLD FAITHFUL (Glasscock-Falk, 1964), Royal Botanical Gardens, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, 1997

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HOW TO CUT PEONIES

Peony show time approaches, and many new exhibitors have questions in mind which they would like to have answered.

Setting dates for peony shows which would suit all gardens is obviously impossible. Some gardens are early and some are late. Some peonies are early and some are late. It is our endeavor to set the show date at a time when the majority of growers can bring their blooms direct from the garden. Those who have extra early locations and those growing the extra early hybrids will have to resort to refrigeration to hold them until show time. In order to do this, it becomes necessary to cut the peonies at the proper time and place them in storage. A temperature of thirty-six degrees is best, but a temperature as high as fifty degrees is satisfactory if the blooms are to be stored for a week or less. Blooms can be kept for over a month when stored at thirty-six degrees. A very important point to keep in mind is that blooms should be chilled for several hours before being brought to the show room. This chilling prevents wilting. Peonies are best stored with the stems in about eight inches of water.

Most new exhibitors are also troubled as to what stage of development buds should be cut. The following types may be cut when the bud is showing color or when the first petals begin to unfold: singles, Japanese, semi-doubles. The full double type such as **Douglas Brand** should not be cut until almost fully open. It is important to place in cold storage as soon as possible after cutting.

It is a good practice to place the buds in paper bags before placing in storage. The procedure is this: cut a hole in the bottom of the bag and slip the stem through the hole—the open end of the bag is then closed by twisting. The bag gives protection to the petals against bruising. The one-pound bag is about the right size for singles, Japs and semi-doubles, while the two-pound bag is more satisfactory for the larger and fuller blooms.

Cut stems about sixteen inches long and remove all foliage except the top leaf. However, the stems should be cut so that at least two leaves are left on the plant. When the buds are brought to the show room, cut off the ends of the stems about a half-inch, place in water, and carefully remove the paper bag. It's a thrilling sight to see the buds unfold into beautiful blooms, and it is even more thrilling to see a ribbon pinned on your exhibit.

★ ★ ★ ★

THE MEDICAL VALUE—THE GROWING AND PROCESSING TECHNOLOGY OF CHINESE TREE PEONIES

*by Wu Jingxu, Senior Agronomist, working in Luoyang Huafeng Ltd.
Co. of Peony & Horticulture, China*

(Address: No. 3 Daonan Rd., Luoyang, China)

China is one of the most ancient and civilized countries in the world, and it once was world-famous for its long history, plentiful produce, and magnificent culture. The invention of traditional Chinese Medical Science, and Chinese Medicine and the medical use of "the root bark of tree peony," and "the peeled root of herbaceous peony"—two kinds of Chinese medicinal materials—are a part of the precious and plentiful cultural heritages.

Tree peony and herbaceous peony both are very rare ornamental flowers and plants. Also, their roots, separately, are a kind of valuable medicinal materials, and have high medical value. Chinese process the roots of tree peony and herbaceous peony, and separately call them "the root bark of tree peony" and "the peeled root of herbaceous peony." In Han dynasty (206 B.C.—A.D. 220), they were listed in middle grade medicines in the book of "Shennong's Book on Chinese Herbal Medicine." Also, it was said that red tree peony flowers were more beautiful in the book of Compendium of Materia Medica, written by Li shizhen in Ming dynasty (A.D. 1368—1644).

In order to develop ancient Chinese traditional culture in the world and contribute to the progression of mankind, we are now willing to introduce the medical value and growing technology of Chinese tree peony and herbaceous peony, and the processing technology of the Chinese medicinal materials as following for all the readers. But because of limited space, we shall separately introduce tree peony and herbaceous peony, and the tree peony first.

I. The medical functions of the root bark of tree peony.

The root bark of tree peony is a pungent flavor, slightly chills, non-poisonous, and could relieve internal heat, lower over-high temperature of blood, invigorate the circulation of blood, reduce stasis of blood, stimulate the menstrual flow, lower over-high pressure of blood, relieve pain, resist harmful bacteria, and diminish inflammation after having gotten into the heart, liver, and kidneys—three channels. Also, it was certainly effective in relieving headaches, lumbago, and arthritis. In clinical practice, it is used to treat evil heat getting into blood, having a fever at night but feeling cool in the morning, having a high temperature, spitting blood, haematuria, feeling pain, shaking with fright, swelling, and feeling sore from carbuncle, injuries from fall, and amenorrheic conditions, etc.

For example, the Medicinal Powder of the Root Bark of Tree

Peony used to treat amenorrheic problems from weak, exhaustion from hectic fever, and having a fever in the afternoon. It is compounded from the root bark of tree peony, the peeled root of herbaceous peony, and Chinese angelica, etc. The famous prescription "the Decoction of Chinese Rhubarb and Mudan" used to treat intestinal pain and is compounded from the root bark of tree peony, Chinese rhubarb, and the kernel of wax gourd, etc. The Free and Unfettered Piu of the Root Bark of tree peony and Cape Jasmine used to treat abnormal menstruation, dysmenorrhea, headache, dizziness caused from hot-tempered irascibility, is compounded from the root bark of tree peony, Cape Jasmine, and the Free and Unfettered Medicinal Powder. Also, it has clear effect on lowering blood pressure to use the decoction of the root bark of tree peony.

There is such volatile oil in the root of tree peony that its main compositions are peonol, glucoside, alkali, benzoic acid, and steroid alcohol, etc. It is certified by experiment that the root bark of tree peony could restrain many kinds of germs.

II. The growing technology of medicinal tree peony.

The growing technology of medicinal tree peony is the same as that of herbaceous peony; it mainly refers to the production of root (the raw and processed material of the root bark of tree peony) at present. The crux of the matter is how to try every means to raise the yield as great as possible. Therefore, first of all, you should select the high-yield and high-quality varieties suitable for medicinal growing such as the tree peony varieties blossoming single-flower (*e.g.*) **Feng Dan Bai**, and the double-flower shape tree peony cultivars (*e.g.*) **Zhao Fen**, **Zhu Sha Lei**, **Jia Ge Jin Zi**, **Sheng Dan Lu**, and **Feng Dan Bai**, etc.

Second, you should select thick, porous and fertile sandy loam benefiting the root's growth.

Third—the digging time should be suitable. In general, to dig once every 3-5 years. This is mainly in accordance with specialized medicinal growing. But it is the growing way on ornamental and medicinal tree peony—it should be different. Usually to take ornament as the dominant factor, and do medical use as secondary factor (*i.e.*) when growing ornament tree peony, to collect the root wiped out and use them as medicinal materials during transplant. The other management technology is same as that of ornament tree peony.

III. The processing technology of the root bark of tree peony.

First, to wash the root of tree peony with water after having been dug out; the second to dry them for 1-2 days in the sun and make them lose water and get soft; the third to softly scrape the skin with a piece of glass or bamboo and pull out the pith in the root (as the saying goes..."pull out muscle"). At last, to spread them out on a piece of mat or curtain, to dry for 2-3 days in the sun. If a sunny day, the root should dry quickly, and be bright-white color and high quali-

ty. If a cloudy day, it should dry slowly, and be dim in color and poor quality. Therefore, it would be better not to scrape skin and pull out tendon on a cloudy day. The effect of scraping skin and pulling out tendon would be best from 8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. on a sunny day. During this time the root can get dry quickly and be high quality as sunlight is full. After 3:00 p.m., because the sun gradually abates, the color of its skin should change into red. After a night if the root couldn't get dry in the day, this should lower its quality.

The end product of root bark of tree peony is round tube-shaped, semi-round tube-shaped, or broken pieces, and have lengthwise crack, the two sides curve toward inside, and the outside surface is of pink-white color or slightly red. The inside surface is brown or yellow color, and has slender lengthwise lines. It is hard, brittle and easy to break off—the section is pink-white in color and it has peculiar fragrance.

After having been processed, the root bark of tree peony should be usually cut into 5-15 cm long little part, and softly put into wooden or paper box, etc. Avoid being cracked to pieces, then put in dry and well-ventilated place, and avoid getting damp and going bad.

The root bark of tree peony produced in China is long-strip, plump, regular, white-color with certain pink, smooth and without xylem, and doesn't even go moldy after storing for a long time, and doesn't attract insects. The decoction is milk-white in color and smells of delicate fragrance assailing the nostrils. The decoction doesn't change flavor and color after storing for a day and a night in summer. The root bark of tree peony is listed in high grade medicines and sold well all over the world. It is mainly produced in Luoyang, Heze and Anhui Bozhou, etc.

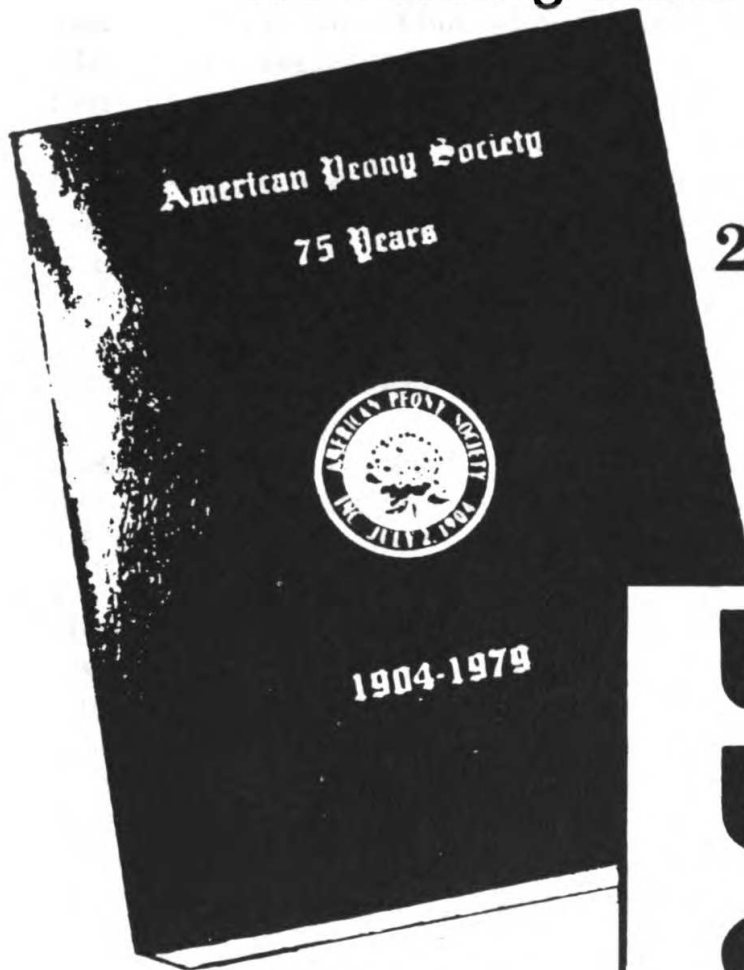
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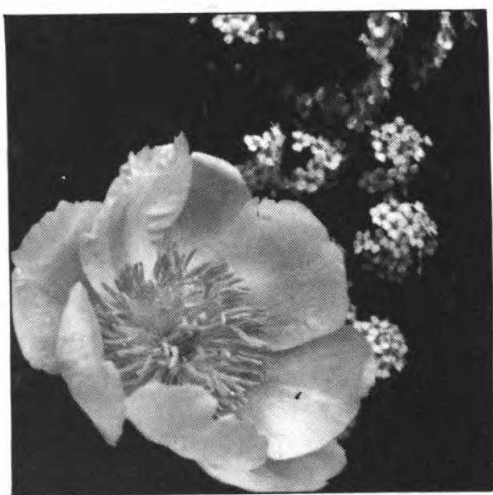
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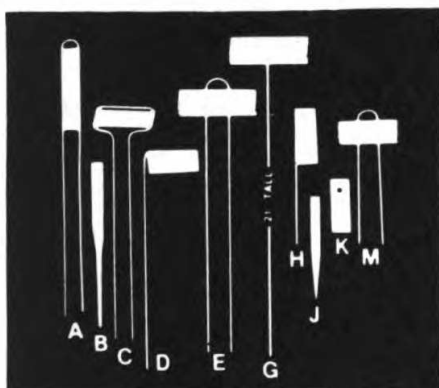
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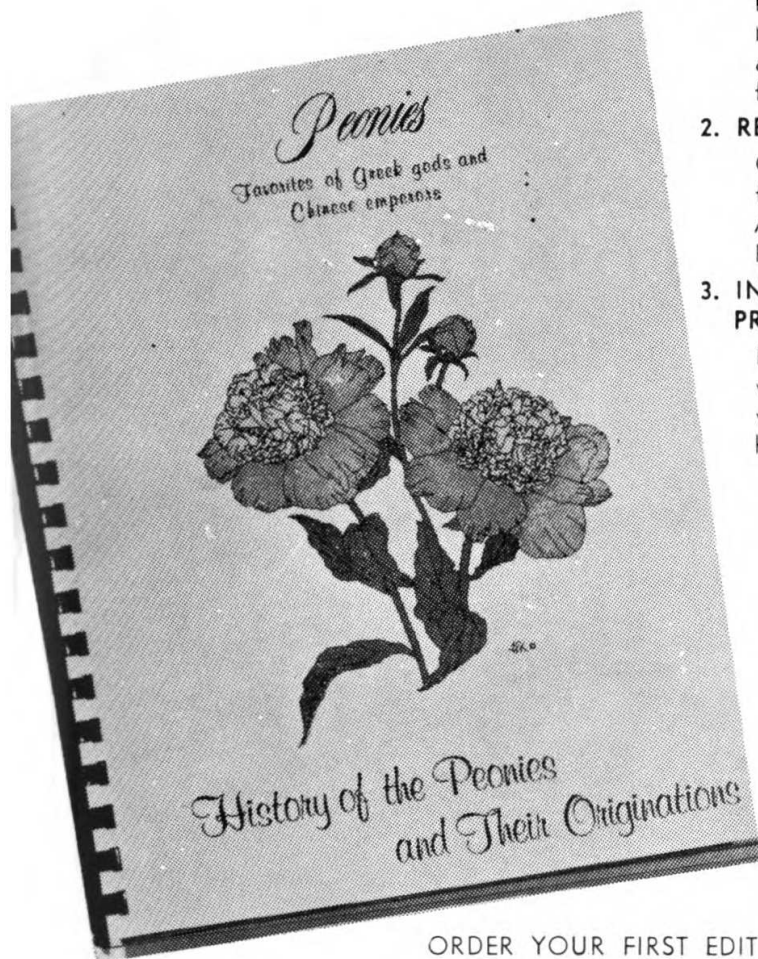
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