

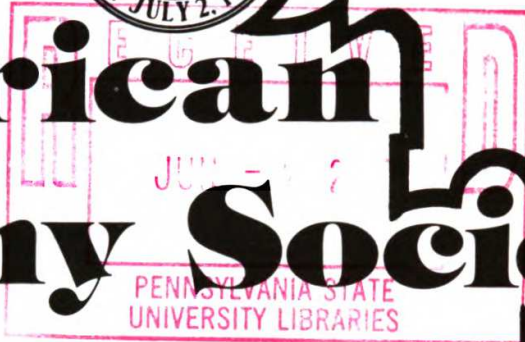
Life Jc

JUNE 2000

NO. 314



The American Peony Society Bulletin



Argonaut (*Nassos Daphnis*)

Name suggests strength, power, and willingness to overcome all danger. Semi-double, pale pink. Mr. Daphnis has given 50 years of work in producing great tree peonies for the peony world. We all thank you!

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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



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. Suffruticosa* 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*

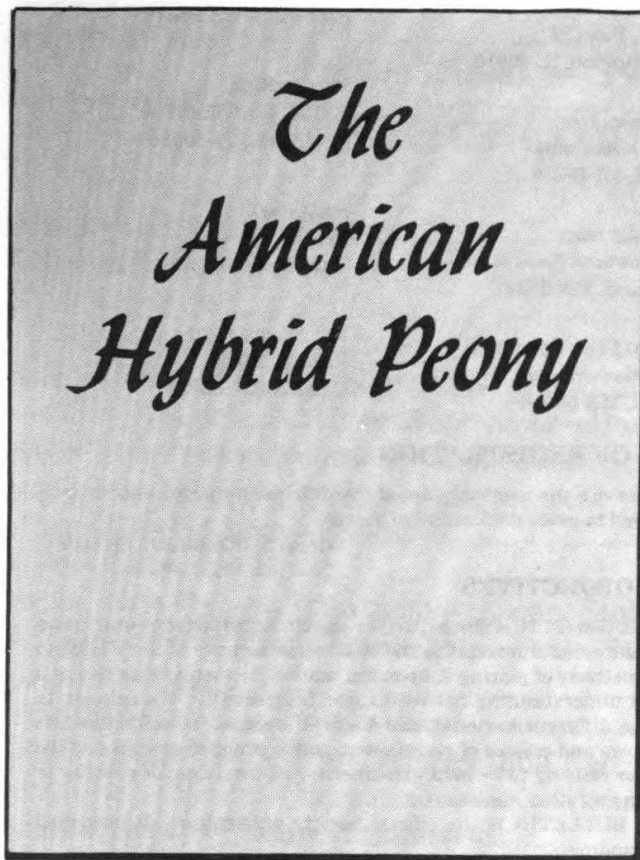
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HYBRID PEONIES



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Peonies in
FULL
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Hybrids
32 Species**
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- **Hard Cover —
Embossed in Gold**

*Devised and
Compiled by
Greta M. Kessenich,
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Hybridizing and
Bibliography*

Ever since contemporary hybridizers unraveled the mysteries of cross pollinating peony species, hybrid crosses have received spellbound attention. This long awaited effort adds to the excitement of growing peonies. Photos permit comparing your hybrids with those authenticated by the hybrid committee plus scores of sideline notes and general information. Be one of the first **\$25.00** to own this premiere edition, just Postpaid

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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 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	Family Triennial.....	27.50
Single Triennial.....	20.00	Life Membership	300.00
Family Annual.....	10.00	Commercial membership	25.00

Family membership, any two related members in same householdOne 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

June 2000 — No. 314

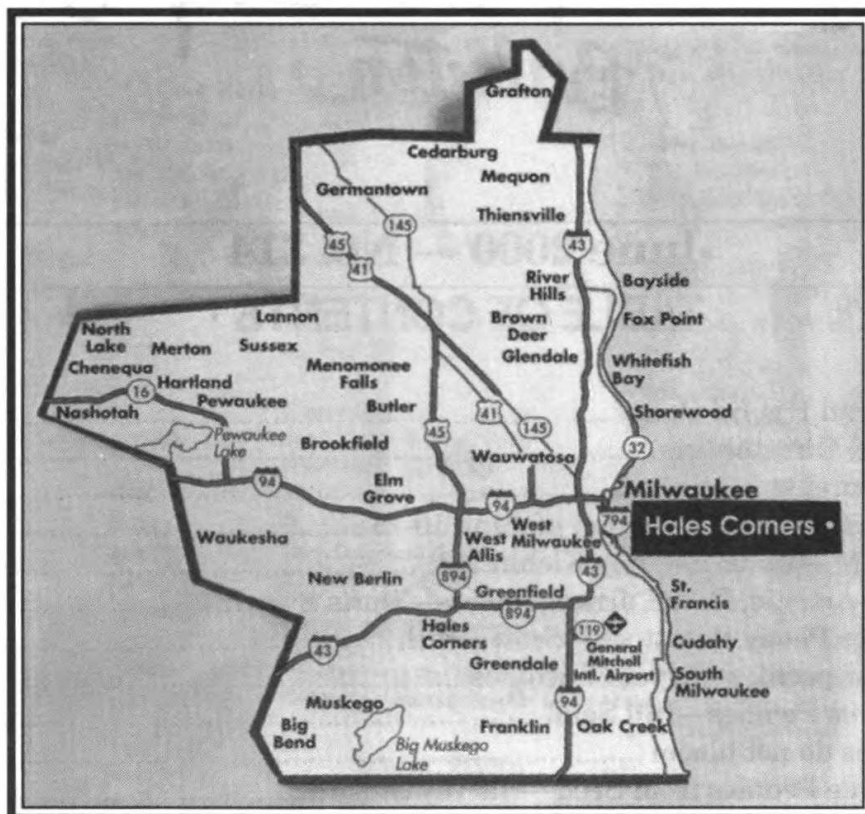
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*If you cut a tree, plant a tree.
It is nature's replaceable energy.*

To Joe Glocka

Our thanks and deep gratitude for your work in the coordination and chairman of this event, the Annual Convention and 95th Annual National Peony Exhibition.



SATURDAY, JUNE 10

7:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.—set up and enter exhibits

8:00 a.m.—Registration (Entry tags provided)

11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.—Judging

LUNCH ON YOUR OWN!

2:00 p.m.—Exhibition opens to the public, closes at 5:00 p.m.

2:30 p.m.—Seminar, "Garden Peonies." Roy Klehm—Workshop tent

7:00 p.m.—Pallas Restaurant—Annual Meeting—Banquet

Root Auction—Peony roots to be donated

SUNDAY, JUNE 11

8:30 a.m.—Board of Directors meeting in Workshop tent

9:00 a.m.—Peony Garden Tour by Theresa Griesbach, Iron Ridge, WI

10:30 a.m.—Show in exhibition building opens to the public

5:00 p.m.—Show closes to the public

CONVENTION

Boerner Botanical Gardens

Milwaukee, WI

June 9, 10, 11, 2000

95th American Peony Exhibition

Sponsored by

Milwaukee Country Park System
Hawks Nursery and Landscape Design
The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
Joe Glocka, Coordinator

Saturday, June 10, 2:30 p.m.— PEONY SEMINAR

Conducted by Roy Klehm, Klehm's Nursery of Barrington, Illinois.
Opening and general comments on "GARDEN PEONIES," plus guest speakers.

A woman's view in using peonies — Janet Wolgast

A man's view in using peonies — Joe Glocka

Tree peonies — Bill Seidl

Peonies — Joe Kresl, President of Hawks Nursery

Pamphlet on peony culture prepared by Boerner for distribution

Questions & Answers — for panel and presenters

This is the time to carefully select early, mid-season, and late variety of peonies for planting in the Fall. There is a fairy land of beauty in a large collection of peonies. The price of a peony root is very modest, taking into consideration that with care, the peony will last a lifetime. Follow planting directions closely and carefully. Transfer the name that is attached to the peony root to your marking on a permanent label. One that can be seen and then call that peony by its name. It is advisable to insert another label of lasting quality in the soil close to the peony root, having it level with the ground.

Tour the grounds of this beautiful Arboretum and see peonies of the future—the Intersectionals. Three of Roger Anderson's peonies which are listed, and growing in the Arboretum are: **Bartzella**, **Julia Rose** and **First Arrival**.

The American Peony Society

250 Interlachen Road, Hopkins, MN 55343

Soon to straddle the millenniums celebrating 100 years in July, 2004.

This portion of the show will be handled by
MILWAUKEE DISTRICT GARDEN CLUBS,
in conjunction with the **MILWAUKEE JUDGES COUNCIL**
and the **IKEBANA SOCIETY**

Detail arrangements by:
Ms. Doris Swartz, 13300 Wrayburn Rd., Elm Grove, WI 53122
Phone: 262/786-6393

ARTISTIC — Class VII
Reflections on the Peony in Millenniums Past
DESIGN DIVISION

CLASS I — REVISITING THE OLD MASTERS

An oval European design using flowers with fruit festooning over rim of container. Varied accessories may be used — 4 exhibits.

CLASS II — SWEET SCENTS OF YESTERDAY

A Victorian nosegay, a mass circular design. Dried or fresh materials may be used — 4 exhibits.

CLASS III — FROM AN EARLY SETTLER'S GARDEN

Early American design. Simplistic informal mixed bouquet of garden grown wild flowers and foliage. OPEN CLASS, primarily American Peony Society exhibitors — 4 exhibits.

CLASS IV — INTO THE MODERN AGE

Twentieth century American design based on geometric form or part of geometric form — 4 entries.

CLASS V — "2000 AND BEYOND"

Creative abstract design. Peonies may be used in combination with other materials—man-made or natural.

SPECIAL EXHIBITS

1. IKEBANA INTERNATIONAL MILWAUKEE CHAPTER #22

Japanese designs of various schools, school name displayed. To be staged on tables draped with black and white screens as background.

RULES:

1. Entries must be placed Friday, June 9th from 10 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. or Saturday, June 10th from 7:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. in designated area at Boerner Botanical Gardens.
2. Judging will be by NCSGC accredited judges and begins promptly at 11:00 a.m., Saturday, June 10th.
3. Peonies must be featured in all designs and need not be grown by exhibitors. Peonies for inclusion in designs will be furnished by the American Peony Society committee in the CCC building work area. All parts of the peony may be used: buds, foliage and blooms.
4. No artificial flowers, foliage, fruit or vegetables may be used in any design.

5. Fresh plant material may not ever be treated. Fresh fruits and vegetables, if cut, must be sealed in an inconspicuous manner. Dried materials may be treated if desired.
6. An exhibitor may enter as many classes as desired, but only one entry permitted per class.
7. CLASS III is open to members of the American Peony Society and the general public. Limit 4 entries only.
8. While the show management will exercise due caution in safeguarding exhibits, it cannot assume responsibility for damage or loss.
9. Advance entries are required and can be registered prior to May 25, 2000. Class III deadline, however, is extended to Saturday, June 10, 10:30 a.m.
10. Personally owned properties must be claimed immediately after the close of the show 5:00 p.m., Sunday, June 11, 2000.

AWARDS

All Classes Eligible

1st — BLUE — 90 or more

2nd — RED — 85 or more

3rd — YELLOW — 80 or more

Honorable Mention: WHITE — 75 or more

Top Award — BEST OF SHOW

★ ★ ★ ★

Thoughts on Grafted Tree Peony Rootstocks

Scott Reath, Vulcan, Michigan

Over the years I have looked in awe at some of the old time contributors to the American Peony Society *Bulletin*. I thought, "what could I write that would be of importance, with so many years of experience that the others have?" Well, the years keep going by and here I am with 30 years of tree peony experience as well as learning from my father, David Reath, and all his years of growing, hybridizing and communicating with Silvia Saunders, Nassos Daphnis, and others. In the past few years I have heard many people's views on what should be done with the rootstocks of tree peonies, and also had many people ask about them.

My father started Reath's Nursery as a hobby. In those early years I learned how to graft and found it interesting and that it was something I could do well. I have been grafting tree peonies since I was 12 years old and have always been fascinated with what causes them to grow or fail. When I was young I enjoyed watching the young grafts grow in the Spring, and to see how the plants progressed in following years. In those days it was all for fun, and, of course, it made a good Summer job. As I got older and went to college, I decided to make horticulture my career, and after graduating from Michigan State University I decided to raise peonies on our

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family farm here at Reath's Nursery. So now, getting grafted tree peonies to grow well for customers is important to my business as well as a matter of personal pride.

Tree peonies are propagated by grafting, as most varieties' growth habits are not conducive to propagation by division. Most often the rootstock used is from an herbaceous type peony. Some people wrongly think that all tree peony herbaceous rootstock should be removed from the plants after 2 to 4 years, forcing the plant to grow entirely from roots, which arise from the scion (often called own roots). They believe that this will result in a healthier plant, but this is not true. Tree peonies can grow only on their own roots but they can also thrive with an herbaceous rootstock still attached. A properly selected rootstock can help make a stronger longer-lived plant.

Herbaceous rootstocks can actually help a plant. Some rootstock types do better with certain varieties of tree peonies. This is one of the challenges of the art of tree peony propagation. Some varieties of tree peonies are much more vigorous with the rootstock attached than plants growing entirely on their own roots. I have found some rootstocks that are much more cold-hardy than lutea hybrid tree peony roots. There have been times in severe cold here that the roots of some varieties of tree peonies have frozen and died and the only thing that kept the plants alive was the herbaceous rootstock. There were no symptoms of the damage visible from above, but when I dug the affected plants for sale, the damage was obvious. So those plants were not able to be sold that year. After two years of "normal" winters the plants were again full of own roots. Tree peonies, like many other plants, have roots that are more sensitive to cold temperature damage than the adjacent underground stem tissue. This is one problem with raising tree peonies in pots in cold northern climates, as the soil in the pot gets much colder because it is not in direct contact with warmer layers below.

Over the years I have personally transplanted thousands of old tree peonies to new locations on our Nursery, and the strongest plants always have a large rootstock. Some people prefer the looks of the more fibrous tree peony root system but the tree peonies do well with herbaceous roots, also. Most plants will root from the scion as well as growing the herbaceous rootstock when planted to the proper depth.

We try to select the right rootstock to variety combination on all the plants we sell, so please do not remove the rootstock from our tree peony grafts. It is much better to keep your plant healthy by giving it proper cultural care such as fertilization and reducing competition from other large trees and shrubs.

★ ★ ★ ★

EXHIBIT YOUR PEONIES

It is easy for an amateur to show flowers, and more amateurs ought to exhibit flowers at the shows. A moderate number of flowers can be shown without much difficulty, and an amateur who will take pains should be able to produce as good flowers as anyone. There is no difficulty in keeping flowers for the show two or three weeks. They should be cut at the proper stage of development and put in a refrigerator with the temperature at about 40 degrees. With a little experience, one learns the proper stage of development, which differs in different varieties. For example, **Festiva Maxima**, or any loosely-built flower, will develop properly in storage from a bud only partly soft to the fingers when cut. But tightly-built heavy flowers must be left on the plant until the flower is half or three-quarters opened.

The late blooming peonies, as a class, require much fuller development on the plant before cutting than the early peonies.

For large blooms remove side buds—that is, leave only one bud on a stalk. This is disbudding.

Blooms may be greatly improved in quality (after the bud has softened and partly opened) by putting over them either a one or two pound paper bag fastened with a pin or rubber band. This protects from the sun, the wind, the rain, and the dew.

There are 5 types of peonies:

* A single peony has a flower with five or more true petals and a center made up of many stems with pollen-bearing anthers.

* The Japanese peony has five or more guard petals with a center of stamens almost completely without pollen.

* The anemone type resembles the above Japanese, but there are no anthers, and the stamens have taken on a petal-like character being narrow and incurved, more or less.

* The semi-double type always shows a greater or less number of broad petals intermixed with the stamens, a prominent feature.

* The double type peonies are composed of many fully developed petals which completely hide any stamens in the center.

* The hybrid peony is a class of its own. Some of them bloom almost two weeks before the other peonies. They have brilliant colors of every hue! Most of them are single and semi-double, with strong stems and lovely foliage.

* The tree peony is distinguished principally by its woody stems. It is not a tree, but a perennial shrub. The branches do not die back to the ground in the winter, as do the herbaceous peonies. It blooms two or three weeks before the other peonies. The color of the flowers is exotic, ranging from the clear shades to the suffusing of the various colors of scarlet, crimson, maroon, blushes, pinks, salmon-pinks and all shades of yellow.

★ ★ ★ ★

GRAFTING:
(A) mysterious art,
OR
(B) just another gardening chore?

Bill Seidl

There is no suspense here! The very way the question is posed should telegraph the correct answer, namely "B." And that should be your FINAL answer. If you're not sure and phone a friend for advice, or poll the APS membership, you may very well be persuaded to select "A" because the "mysterious art" answer is a myth established in many people's minds.

One definition of grafting does describe it as an art—"the art of combining a twig or bud of one plant with a branch or root of another so that a union forms and growth continues." (Klingbeil & Dana, Univ. of Wisc. circular 572, June 1959)

But there is no mystery in how to do it. Perhaps the mystery-concept has become established by the oft repeated remarks in the literature that even experienced, professional nursery-persons count themselves lucky to attain a success rate of 50%. In fact, in the Nehrling book (see "1" below) the authors state (p. 152) that 25% is lucky, counting the second-year survivors. How depressing!

On the contrary, a success rate of 75-100% is a reasonable expectation, even by unskilled amateurs, IF you follow the RIGHT rules and perform ALL the steps as directed. My first experience in peony grafting began in August, 1984, when I cut 12 scions (all terminal buds) of **Anna Marie**, a hybrid t.p. seedling that I had not yet named, and took them to the Reath Nursery where Scott (David's son) made the grafts. On returning home I made two more and planted them at home in open garden soil. By next April, all 14 were sprouting vigorously, and all survived through the second year. However, in counting grafting successes, I do not count failures in the second year. Too many other factors can decrease the success rate that have no connection with one's grafting procedures.

During ensuing years I came to expect 75-100% success rates. The only deviations made from that first year were (1) to switch from the triangular grafting method to the wedge method, and (2) to use budding strips and parafilm tape rather than the green, plastic floral tape used at the Reath Nursery. Before my exposure to peony grafting, I had successfully grafted lilacs and apples in spring, and chip-budded magnolias in August. These experiences helped eliminate the mystery from the art. It also got me used to budding strips and parafilm tape.

Since there are excellent articles available on grafting, I do not intend to redescribe all the steps to be taken. I do want to correct what I perceive as faulty advice, to emphasize the most important steps, and expand on a few topics. For good accounts on grafting I refer you to the following:

(1) *Peonies Outdoors, and In*, Arno & Irene Nehrling, 1960, pp. 151-153.

(2) *The Peonies*, Editor: Wister, 1962, pp. 183-190. I believe this section was written by Harold Wolfe.

(3) *Root-Grafting of Tree Peonies*, David Reath article, *APS Bul.* 213, 1975, but more readily available as reprints in *APS—75 Years*, pp. 61-62, and the *APS Handbook of the Peony*.

(4) *Propagation of Tree Peonies*, John Simkins' article, *APS Bul.* 310, June 1999, pp. 29-33.

In the past five years, three major books on peonies have been published; the first two below contain information on grafting:

(5) *Peonies*, Allan Rogers, 1995, pp. 120-124.

(6) *The Gardner's Guide to Growing Peonies*, Martin Page, 1997, pp. 27-29.

(7) *Peonies*, Jane Fearnley-Whittingstall, 1999. See p. 357.

The best guides are #2 and #3. In #7, the author does not try to describe the "specialized technical skill" required in grafting, but does describe a method of rooting t.p. cuttings with up to a 50% success rate. A most encouraging report.

The names of two major grafting methods may be ambiguous. What I call the "wedge" method is also known as the "cleft" method; the wedge-shape of the prepared scion is like that of an ax-head, or the tapered wood or metal shapes used to split wood or lift heavy objects. In what I call the "triangular" method, some refer to the prepared scion as being shaped to a "triangular wedge" [not my idea of a true wedge], hence, they call this method the "wedge" method.

The triangular method is favored at the Reath Nursery and probably at Caprice Farm Nursery (#5 above), and is described in #2 (pp. 186 & 188), 3, 4, 5, and 6. The wedge graft is described in #1 and as an alternative method in #2 (p. 186, left column). Two other methods are described on p. 186 and 188 which seem very easy to perform. I've tried only the two major methods and find the wedge method much easier to do and to teach to others. (You need only follow the sketches provided with this article.) The triangular method is more difficult to execute, to explain (see the attempt in #4, p. 31), and to illustrate. Nevertheless, Scott Reath makes an ART of it by whipping out grafts at 30 seconds each while I dawdle along at six minutes using the "easier" wedge method. I believe the Klehm Nursery uses the wedge method, but both bind the graft union with green, plastic, floral tape, a more efficient one-step oper-

ation than the budding strip/parafilm method. (Mr. Simkins, #4, suggests this may not be necessary, p. 32. No wrapping at all!?? Scary!).

Some claim there is no cambium layer in the root (and I tend to believe that, but some writers imply otherwise), hence, no need to bring the cambium layer of the scion in contact with the outer edge or surface of the root. Success depends on how close to 100% you can bring the cut, newly exposed, plane surfaces of the scion in contact with those of the stock (i.e., understock). That is why you are urged to shape the scion in two strokes. Well, good luck! A professional can do this. I usually have to whittle away to do it, but the last strokes are toward the same end—perfectly plane surfaces and eventually maximum contact.

This is the time to point out that these newly exposed surfaces are naturally free of disease and fungus bacteria and man-made chemicals. DO NOT INTRODUCE EITHER. Keep your cutting instruments clean, and DO NOT water (tap water or rainfall) the grafts. No matter how well the graft union seems to be waterproofed, free-flowing water will penetrate and introduce disease organisms. Likewise, DO NOT treat completed grafts with a bleach solution. Why introduce sodium hypochlorite to virgin surfaces? You may, of course, treat the roots (I do!) and the scions, too, before making the grafts—but DO RINSE OFF the bleach solution afterwards! Whatever the strength of your bleach solution or the soaking duration, I figure the job isn't done until the roots are bleached noticeably lighter.

My most important advice is to keep your completed grafts moist and continually warm, even VERY WARM, for the next 2-3 weeks. This is true whether you plant them in the open field, as I do, or hold them in plastic bags for later planting.

Finally, there is evidence that scions are still viable after two weeks of moist storage. There is no need to discard valuable scions if they aren't used the same day, or within a few days of cutting. (But don't push your luck—fresher is better!).

To summarize the information in the last three paragraphs:

- (1) You can use scions up to two weeks old.
- (2) Keep grafts continually WARM for up to three weeks.
- (3) Do not water grafts, or allow rain water to reach them, until Spring growth begins.
- (4) Do not use a bleach solution on completed grafts.

These "rules" contradict some of the advice offered in other articles, but I feel confident in stating them. *There is another general rule to keep in mind:*

- (5) Keep grafts in sync with the natural growing season.

The longer you delay grafting (after mid-August in Zone 5), the more likely your success rate will decrease. Proper grafting time insures Fall root development and sufficient winter cooling—90 days plus in the 30's Fahrenheit, or colder, maybe 40's OK. Open ground

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plantings may freeze, but freezing should be delayed and then prolonged into Spring as long as possible.

GRAFTING PREPARATION. I take great pains to observe Rules 2 and 5. One grafting bed will accommodate a double row 2 ft. apart, with grafts one foot apart in each row. The length of the bed is x feet (for me, usually 40 ft.). This means cultivating an area 4 ft. wide by x ft. long. (If I have two parallel beds, they are centered 6 ft. apart, leaving a 4 ft. wide path.) It may be helpful to amend the soil with compost. But don't make it acid. I think peonies prefer a pH on the alkaline or sweet side. Firm the soil and rake level. Water down. Use the rake handle to make holes that mark the graft locations. Insert deeply, about 12 inches; this allows hot air to penetrate the soil more readily. Cover the bed with clear, 3 or 4 mil, plastic sheeting, readily available in 10' x 25' rolls. Cut the roll into pieces 10' long and 5-6' wide. Overlap them about a foot until the entire bed is covered. To warm the soil deep down, this should be done two weeks in advance of planting. Since the 5-6' width is excessive at this stage, double up the edges and bury continuously in the ground so the hot air that develops under the plastic can't escape.

PLANTING THE GRAFTS. After making the grafts in the morning of a sunny day, plant them in the early afternoon. Unroll a sufficient amount of plastic and begin planting in both rows. (If you have weeds galore, spray them with Round-Up AFTER planting the grafts; their tips are buried and not susceptible to chemical damage. Honest!). I mark each group of varieties with an 8-inch plastic T-label, but sink it to ground level to accommodate the re-laying of the plastic. I make holes for the grafts with a gravel shovel, removing a wedge of earth, and plant them upright [the grafts; I'm on hands and knees], but if they are unusually long, they are slanted. Some recommend this routinely, with varying degrees of slant. **FIRM** the soil around the roots and graft union, less so higher up. The soil should be warm to the touch at the depth of the union. In ensuing days, add more grafts until your x-foot length is used up. If I know I have some poor grafts (small buds and/or thin scions), I plant 2, 3, or 4 in a spot intended for one. **NEVER** water the grafts. At the end of each planting, replace the plastic, covering the edges again with ground. The plastic should maintain high soil warmth and moisture, and keep rain water out. One year a thunderstorm blew off about 10 ft. of the plastic sheeting on one end. It was on rented land and I did not realize it for 3-4 days. I recovered the area, but the next Spring there was 100% failure in that area, with normal 75-100% "takes" elsewhere.

AFTERCARE. After three weeks or longer, well into September, remove the plastic. More weeding may be needed. To protect the plastic labels against breakage I hammer a 12-inch wood stake (48-inch laths cut into fourths) behind each one, leaving about four inches exposed. Cover the bed with marsh hay to about 6 inches

deep. Baled hay comes in compressed layers which should be fluffed up. The area covered should extend beyond the rows by, say, 8-10 inches. Then re-cover with plastic, again burying the edges in soil—if possible. Here's where that "excessive" 5-6 foot width is needed. A 5' width doesn't quite do the job; 6' is better. Laths or longer strips of wood, along with bricks, will be needed to keep the plastic in place, esp. at the overlapped edges. The purpose of the plastic and hay is to delay freezing and allow for a long Fall season for root development. Eventual freezing is OK, if it occurs, but should be prolonged into Spring. If there is no snow cover over the plastic in early March (Zone 5), remove the plastic lest heating beneath it causes premature growth of the grafts into the hay. If this occurs, loosen the hay and hope the tender growth hardens in time to resist the more severe frosts. If any new shoots are killed (frost, sun, breakage), be patient. Even single-bud scions have two undeveloped side buds which may then grow and take over. In all of the above, let's hope you don't have a rodent problem.

GRAFTING PROCEDURE. Refer to the drawings. The wedge part of the scion (SIGH-un, also spelled "cion") is inserted into the cleft of the understock (or just "stock") so that one of the uncut, natural surfaces, marked "A", is flush with the root surface. The purpose is not to line-up cambium layers but to avoid a depression or pocket where water can collect and disease start. If the scion-width equals the stock-width so that the same line-up occurs on the opposite side, that would be ideal. Usually I find the scion-width is less than the stock-width, which means a shoulder is formed on one side. This should be sliced off at a slant to make it easier to bind the union and to decrease the size of the pocket, i.e., the unfilled cleft space. Use a budding strip to bind scion to stock, drawing the exposed surfaces of each into firm contact. I usually start near the top and work down, leaving enough of the strip left to cover my thumb and tuck under that last loop. Then cover the entire area of the union with parafilm tape. I cut the parafilm into 1" x 4" lengths. Remove the backing, stretch out the first inch and hold against the budding strip. (It won't adhere by itself.) Loop the stretched part around and press against what is already being held down. It will adhere to itself, and you can now leisurely wrap the entire union, stretching the tape as you go. On larger roots, more than one piece of tape may be needed.

The cleft need not be of any particular width. If wider than the wedge-end of the scion, the budding strip will draw the surfaces together. If too narrow, it can be cut wider. In fact, a single cut is OK if the stock will yield enough to allow the scion to be wedged in. This is often not the case, so I routinely make two cuts and remove a wedge-shaped piece of root.

The drawing may be misleading. The scion usually takes up more cleft-space than shown. Also, the root looks a bit too large, old,

and gnarly, esp. with the thick laterals. The rootpiece should be young and, if available, I prefer ones with laterals, however thin. I feel this gives the new plant a headstart for next year.

OWN ROOTING. The sooner roots develop above the graft union, the better. To encourage this, one year I wounded the scion-wood with vertical slashes of the razor, moistened, and shook on some rooting powder, Hormodin 3. (There is usually more space to do this than shown in the drawing). All I can report is that the treatment did NOT hurt the success ratio of "takes," it being equally good for both treated and untreated grafts. But the careless use of Round-Up in the first growing season wiped out so many plants in one group or the other that no valid conclusions could be made.

RODENT CONTROL. At home, I have cats. The money saved on birdseed is used to buy cat food. My guilt at the loss of neighborhood birds has been assuaged by recent news that the state DNR is planning a hunting season for mourning (mourning?) doves. At my "away" garden I trap voles and their relatives with small plastic traps (they don't rust in the elements) baited with peanut butter. Place them near a hole or runway. To prevent birds from being killed, cut two holes in the edge of a plastic pot and place over the trap; weight with a brick.

SUPPLIES. The blurb beneath the parafilm tape is taken from the current (2000) Mellinger's Garden Catalog, p. 22. The last two statements apply to the grafting of lilac, apple, etc. scions in Spring, where the entire scion is covered. When parafilm is used in August to cover chip-buds of magnolias, it must be slit vertically and unwrapped after about 18 days; otherwise the buds will rot. They are not expected to grow the current year. IF they do, in Zone 5, they'll likely produce growth too tender to survive the winter. I first learned of parafilm in the early 1980's from a magnolia fan from whom I purchased a roll. Since then I buy it from the local hospital supply room. My last roll was 4 inches wide, 250 feet long, cost 15-20 dollars, and has lasted me a l-o-n-g time. Mellinger's offers a 1/2 inch-size (I have no idea what quantity that is) for \$2. I have before me an old circular from the manufacturer, American (National?) Can Company, stating that parafilm is available from medical and laboratory supply firms, incl. Fisher Scientific Co. The circular explains its use in grafting—which I understand was an unintended use discovered later. Their instructions recommend pieces 2" wide x 3-6" long, and to cover all areas with two or more layers. Here's how they describe what it is:

Parafilm M is a waterproof, flexible, stretchable, self-adhesive, thermoplastic film. It allows gases (oxygen, CO, etc.) to pass through, yet is a good moisture barrier. It is available in 2-inch, 4-inch, and 20-inch wide rolls and has paper backing to prevent it from sticking to itself. Parafilm has been used for many years in the medical and lab-

oratory industry as a fast, economical covering or stopper for test tubes, beakers, vials, and flasks. It has proven to be a good sealant to moisture, yet it allows some passage of air. Therefore, Parafilm is most aptly suited to the demands of grafting where a tight moisture barrier is required yet some passage of oxygen and carbon dioxide is required.

Mellinger's also offers budding strips in various sizes. I find the size illustrated to be ideal. As a substitute, use rubber bands. Some articles recommend size #33 which measures 3-1/2 inches (7" when cut) x 1/8" x 1/32" (gauge .031?). I've tried size #62 which measures 2-1/2 (5" when cut) x 1/4 x 1/32 and find it somewhat unwieldy.

In his article on grafting, #3, David Reath refers to the green, plastic, floral tape as "Miracle Tie," and this is offered by Mellinger's, p. 45, in three sizes. It does not appear under "Grafting Supplies," and is described as "a green, stretchable tape for tying, staking, training or flagging. Strong, pliable and colorfast." Mellinger's, 2310 W. South Range Road, North Lima, OH 44452-9731. (www.mellingers.com)

The best markers for a smooth surface are LISTO #1620 pens, made by the Listo Pencil Corporation, Alameda, California. They write like china markers but are much more practical as they can be clipped onto one's pocket and renewed with replacement leads, 1-3/8 in. long, six to a box, size 162. Marks last indefinitely, with no fading, but can be removed with water and a Comet-type powder-cleanser. I never see them in nursery supply catalogs, and buy mine at a local office supply store.

AGE LIMITS FOR VIABLE SCIONS. Once cut, scions can retain viability for two weeks. I first discovered this about 1986 when scions arrived in the mail before my grafting bed was ready. Stored in the refrigerator, they were used almost two weeks later with normal grafting success. (The cut ends do dry back a little, so extra long scions should be harvested to allow for necessary shortening.) I could've made the grafts when the scions arrived and held them in plastic bags and moist media for the entire three-week healing period, but was unfamiliar with that option. For the past two years I've sent scions to Derek Irvine, NZS and Bernard Chow, Australia. Both reported successful grafts. Mr. Chow said the scions were two weeks old without cold storage. The scions were cut about mid-December and grafted late December or early January. Since the seasons are reversed, this amounts to spring and early summer grafting! This gives rise to some interesting speculations:

(1) I understand that tree peonies sent from China to New Zealand are automatically refused at customs for fear of nematode infestation. Would not the importation of scions bypass that problem?

(2) Within one's hemisphere, north or south, would not Spring grafting be feasible? Lactiflora plants dug in March (Zone 5) could

be warmed up and used to provide understock for scions taken in early April. After three weeks of warm, healing temperatures indoors, the new plants would immediately be in sync with the new growing season. I have never heard of any failures at this, probably because there have never been any attempts?

(3) Within one's hemisphere, August sales and exchanges of scions would bypass all the plant importation problems. Large-scale trading between nurseries in China, Japan, N. America, and Europe could increase t.p. sales by a quantum jump. Tell me if this is all fantasy and impractical. [My dates are for the northern hemisphere.]

NEW HORIZONS. Grafting allows you to quickly share your good fortune. One garden visitor wanted a t.p. seedling of which I had only the original plant. So I made three grafts in August and told her how to take care of them. A year later she returned and paid me for two plants, twice as many as what I have of my own seedling.

Peonies aside, grafting can expand your horticultural horizons, allowing you new vistas of gardening pleasure. You can make your own 5-in-1 fruit trees. Or 5-in-1 lilacs. I've recently converted a Japanese Tree Lilac to bearing only "Canadian" hybrids. Next I'd like to convert the Chinese T.L., with its peeling bark, to bear flowers of a little-leaf lilac shrub, *S. microphylla superba*, which reblooms in August. One could convert a domestic apple to a flowering crab, or a common magnolia to a yellow-flowered variety, or the common horse chestnut to a red-flowering type, or a ginkgo seedling to a male clone. Plums, apricots, and peaches will intergraft.

In the past six years I've learned of pear/Mt. Ash hybrids and Mt. Ash/chokecherry hybrids (some are listed in Mellinger's) and that they will graft onto each other and onto pear trees. A great conversation-piece in my garden is a pear tree bearing both pears and reddish-purple Mt. Ash-type berries with compound leaves.

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Why Peonies Do Not Bloom

- Plants too young and immature. Let them develop.
- Planted too deep. Examine and, if eyes are more than three inches under ground, raise to proper height, two inches.
- Large clumps planted without proper division. Dig, divide into small or standard divisions and plant. Many failures due to this cause.
- Buds killed by late frost. Hope for better luck next year.
- Buds killed by disease. They turn black and die. Spray as directed.
- Buds attacked by thrips. They open partially, turn brown and fall. Spray to prevent this.
- Buds waterlogged, also turn brown and refuse to open. Bagging

- would help.
- Plants undernourished. Buds show but do not develop. Fertilize to add strength to the plant.
 - Ground too dry. Water down to the bottom of the roots.
 - Roots infected with nematodes or root-knot or both. Destroy.
 - Plants undermined by moles.
 - Excessively hot weather. Late Fall doubles often fail from this cause. No remedy.
 - Planted too near trees and shrubs, or crowded by other plants.
 - Too much shade makes the plants tall and leafy. Move.
 - Moved and divided too often. When once planted, they should be left alone and never moved, unless absolutely necessary.
 - Too much nitrogen. Cut down on fertilizer rich in nitrogen.
 - Over-fertilization is the most potent cause of failure. A little dressing of bonemeal and wood ashes, not too close to the plants and carefully worked into the soil, will be beneficial; but this should not be overdone.
 - The serious diseases of peonies are of the root, either root gall or rot. The security against these consists in planting clean stock in clean soil, and avoiding over-fertilization and bad drainage.
 - Healthy roots cannot be grown, and good results cannot be obtained from replanting in the same soil where peonies were previously grown. When one must plant where a peony grew before, the soil should be taken out and carried away and new soil put in.



GROWING TREE PEONIES FROM SEED

By Harvey F. Stoke, 1879-1977, Roanoke, Virginia

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 latter 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 the 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 their first year, the plants will develop from one to three leaves. When these fall in the 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.

Annual growth starts very early in the Spring and is completed by June, even in the North. Do not remove leaves or healthy growth during the growing season, for the Spring's early and almost explosive growth and blossoming is dependent on the nutrients stored in fleshy roots during the previous season.

For a real flower lover never to make the acquaintance of the tree peony is to miss one of life's most pleasing experiences.

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A DYNASTY OF TREE PEONY SPECIALISTS:

AD 1849-2000

By Peter Smithers, Vico-Morcote, Switzerland

A native of China, the Moutan or Tree Peony was placed under 'Imperial Protection' by the Emperor Yang Ti who reigned in the Sui Dynasty from AD 589 to 618. It has generally been believed that this was a matter of aesthetics, since the Moutan has enjoyed a pre-eminent place in Chinese and later in Japanese art and horticulture ever since. It is, however, probable that the reason for the Emperor's protection was due to the important place occupied by native Chinese Tree Peonies in the pharmacopoeia of those times. Wild plants of various species are still collected by peasants for the same purpose under the present Marxist Dynasty. It was probably also for medical reasons that during the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-906) the Moutan was taken to Japan by Buddhist Monks, where it became the 'Botan' and flourished exceedingly.

Medicine or no, the aesthetic qualities of the Moutan/Botan were much appreciated both in China and in Japan, and by the time of the Ming Dynasty (AD 1368-1644) there were numerous named varieties such as 'Dancing Green Lion,' 'Wang Family Greater Red' or 'Blessed Heavens Fragrance.' These plants changed hands for very large sums of money. The breeding of Tree Peonies in Japan and China diverged over the centuries. In China the tendency has been towards very large fully-double flowers, impressing by their size and mass display; in Japan towards elegant single flowers, impressing by the detail and beauty of the individual bloom.

The first Tree Peonies arrived in Europe from China at the end of the eighteenth century and it was in France that their breeding outside of Japan and China was first developed. It was, however, not until 1849 that Jean-Baptiste Ruitton founded a nursery near Lyon which specialized in what was still the novelty of Chinese Tree Peonies. In due course, he was succeeded in the Nursery by his son, Francois.

At the end of the nineteenth century with the opening up of Japan to the outside world the first Japanese Tree Peonies reached Europe, and Francois Ruitton procured the early arrivals for the family nursery. In this he was aided by his son-in-law, Benoit Riviere, who succeeded him as head of the family business in 1905. Under Benoit, the nursery increased its commitment to Tree and Herbaceous Peonies until his premature death in 1913. There was then one of those emergencies which occur from time to time in all Dynasties. Benoit's son, Antoine, was but 11 years old, and so there was a Regency. Benoit's widow, Marie, ran the business until 1928 when her son, Antoine, succeeded her. The nursery at this time specialized in Tree and Herbaceous Peonies, Hydrangeas and Lilacs.

Antoine concentrated on building up the collection of Tree Peonies. One by one he acquired the early French hybrids raised by Lemoine, and it is largely due to his foresight that these fine garden plants have survived in our gardens. At his death, the nursery stocked about sixty varieties of Tree Peony, probably the largest collection in the world outside of Japan at that time.

From 1970 Antoine's son, Michel, made Peonies the sole business of the Nursery, now conducted at Crest, not far from the site of the original Ruitton Nursery near Valence. Taking advantage of the improved communications which have facilitated such things Michel and his wife, Suzanne, have established valuable contacts with Roy Klehm, formerly President of the American Peony Society, who propagates and sells a wide range of Peonies, particularly American Hybrid Tree Peonies, at his nursery in South Barrington, Illinois.

My own collection of Japanese and American hybrids at Vico Morcote in southern Switzerland had long provided Michel with grafts for his Nursery. He and Suzanne would arrive by car from Crest, and would spend the day working rapidly collecting and preparing scions. Immediately when the work was finished, they would disappear at high speed back to France, where, before going to bed, Michel would graft onto the stocks already prepared, the whole operation being completed as rapidly as possible. Speed is part of the secret of a high success rate in Tree Peony grafts.

Meanwhile, my own collection of about 200 Japanese and American Hybrids, had begun to decline. When our garden here was a sun-drenched hillside, the Tree Peonies had reveled in our climate. But now, they were beginning to suffer the effects of shade in our artificial ecosystem, in which a high canopy of Magnolias is the main element. Besides, I would not see eighty again, and I was anxious to secure their future, particularly that of my own hybrids. It would make sense to give them to the Rivieres, where Michel's son, Jean Luc, and his wife were already hard at work and ready to take over when Michel should retire.

They had already thoughtfully produced yet another generation of Rivieres to succeed them in due course. So 104 named varieties: Japanese, American, and my own registered hybrids from *P. rockii* went off to France. As a result some are already growing in the garden of the British Embassy in Tokyo, thanks to Lady Wright, until very recently British Ambassadors in that exciting capital.

Michel and Suzanne are now retired from the business, but certainly not from growing Tree Peonies. Michel has continued to add new plants to his collection. It now contains about 250 named varieties. From these he has made a number of selections for breeding. In his garden at Aoust Sye not far from the Peony Fields of the Nursery, my own much loved plants were in splendid health, and in full bloom when I visited them in April 1999.

The Nursery sells plants of their own propagation from an illustrated catalogue prepared by Jean Luc which is an important and beautifully illustrated Peony document. Best of all, devoted Peony fans are sure of a warm welcome by the Rivieres.

I suspect that the Emperor Yang Ti would be pleased were he to see the present state of the plants whose ancestors he protected, even if they are not widely cultivated for medicinal purposes outside of the Orient. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a Dynasty as amongst other things 'A Line of Kings and Princes.' In the world of Tree Peonies, the Riviere family are indeed Kings and Princes.

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REGISTRATIONS

CENTER STAGE (David L. Reath, Vulcan, Michigan), April 16, 2000. Parentage, lutea hybrid tree peony. First bloomed 1976. Single, white with red/purple flares. Stamens, no pollen or seeds. Pleasant fragrance, excellent substance, very good bloom. Height 44"—blooms in late mid-season, vigorous, stem strength, tree peony with well displayed blooms. Foliage more finely cut than the average lutea hybrid tree peony. This variety very resistant to botrytis, dark green leaves until frost. Blooms open creamy white and quickly change to pure white. Flowers have a very eye-catching symmetrical center.

PINK COTTON CANDY (David L. Reath, Vulcan, Michigan), April 16, 2000. Seedling #80-19. Pink double, ball form, herbaceous hybrid. Has seeds, no stamen or pollen. Good substance, good amount of bloom with slight fragrance. Early mid-season bloom, height 24 inches, good stem strength, dark green foliage. The flower has a light pink base with darker pink highlights mixed throughout the double blooms. A vigorous strong plant.

KATHARINE (David L. Reath, Vulcan, Michigan), April 16, 2000. White double lactiflora, flat form, few stamens. No pollen or seeds. First bloomed 1979. Very good amount of bloom, fragrant, good substance, excellent stem strength, 34" height. Strong, vigorous plant, dark green foliage. Blooms late mid-season, occasional flower showing rose colored flecks on the edges of the petals.

FRIZ-BEE (R. W. Tischler, Faribault, MN), 1999. Parentage unknown. Dark red hybrid, 5-6 inch bloom. Bright yellow center. Plant 22 to 24 inches tall, blooms early with good foliage. No side buds.

BEN ERICKSON (R. W. Tischler, Faribault, MN), 1999. Parentage unknown. Medium colored red double, 5-6 inch bloom. Bright yellow stamens. Blooms mid-season, fairly strong stems.

NAME CORRECTION:

JEAN ERICKSEN (Mrs. Jean Ericksen), December 6, 1999.

Deep red Japanese. No pollen or seeds, good substance. One bud per stem with numerous side buds. Floriferous, side buds extend bloom time. This deep red Jap has a center the same shade as the outer petals when first opens. As flower ages the staminodes become silver tipped. Strong 38" stems, mid-season bloom, vigorous grower. Photographs.

Registered—Marvin Joslin, Canada



Moving Old Peonies

Ray E. Ward, Russellville, AR 72801

I really do not have a garden—what I have are ten plants from my parents—now twelve.

These peonies were planted by my parents on our farm near Montevideo, Minnesota in 1941. I have no idea as to names. There are 6 deep red wine and 4 medium pink—or if the plants came from a local nursery, or by mail. They grew in the same spot by the yard fence until 1981, several years after my parents died. That year they were moved to north central Arkansas. My brother dug them using his backhoe, and we transported them in large No. 10 washtubs and heavy rubber livestock feeders. They grew and bloomed there for five years. Then they were again dug and moved to my yard in Russellville, Arkansas, mid-way between Ft. Smith and Little Rock.

The soil in my yard is heavy clay. I dug holes at least twice as large and deep as the clumps, filled with commercial topsoil with well-rotted cow and horse manure. Small clumps of root broke off of two plants and that is how I now have twelve. They have bloomed every year and the only fertilizer I have used is a small amount of bonemeal. The soil has settled (washed) and now some roots (eyes) are showing at soil back. I would like to add some topsoil to the bed and believe I can add about 1-1/2 inches, perhaps a bit less, and not harm the plants.

We have had a very warm winter with some daytime temps. of 70-75° and nights in the mid 40's. Just this past Thursday we received 5-6 inches of snow and 26° temp. Was up to 40° today, and snow is melting. Before the snow, some pink shoots were showing in some clumps. I do not mulch them in winter, just cut bold stems and discard. It seems that every spring some pink shoots show early, but does not seem to hurt the blooming.

I have never measured the height of the plants but it does seem that, overall, they are shorter than when first set out here in Russellville (lack of fertilizer?).

The only other flower I grow of any amount is iris of which I have

a couple hundred varieties. My peonies will soon be 59 years old, and doing rather well—at least I think so!

I am 75 years old, and retired from the U.S. Army in 1973 with 30 years active service.

Sincerely, Ray E. Ward



RAINBOW IN OUR YARD

Gary White & Linda Rader, Lincoln, Nebraska

We have about 25 peony cultivars. Most of these are older varieties, but very beautiful. We do plan to add a few newer varieties (at least, newer to us) this year and next. We also have several plants of most of the varieties that we have. Last year was our best peony bloom ever! Our back yard was ablaze with color, and with another of our passion plants—irises—also in bloom, we literally had all the colors of the rainbow in our yard. Irises and peonies make wonderful companion plants for each other. I especially like Siberian irises with peonies, and they are wonderful in bouquets.

Three of our favorites are **Better Times**, **Madame Butterfly** and **Elsa Sass**. All of these were outstanding last year. This was the third year for most of our peonies. Watching the peonies develop over 3 years really drove home the saying: "*The first year they sleep, the second year they creep, and the third year they leap.*" Ours did just that! It was amazing how much they leaped in that third year. We were impressed and really grateful, since our garden was on the American Iris Society's Region 21 Spring Tour. The peonies were just about at peak and were beautiful, blooming with all the tall bearded and Siberian irises. We had lots of wonderful comments about the peonies from those iris people.

Better Times does not have great fragrance, but it is a great garden plant. The stalk holds its flowers up very well, and they last quite a long time. I'm curious about the name **Better Times**. My own idea about the name (and I may be totally wrong) is that this plant was registered in the second half of the 1930's and introduced in 1941, just after the Great Depression, and those were surely better times. Of course, this was just before America's involvement in WWII.

Madame Butterfly is another of our favorites. Our single plant now is quite large and rewards us every Spring with lots of foliage and lots of flowers. The blooms are absolutely beautiful. I love those large deep pink/fuschia guard petals enclosing the mass of lighter pink petaloids and yellow in the very center.

Of course, **Elsa Sass** is a favorite here in Nebraska, home of Jacob and HP Sass. The Sass brothers were renowned hybridizers of

peonies, irises, lilacs, etc. **Elsa Sass** has those wonderfully silky white petals and is still one of the best late whites. A row of this peony is very special. It won the APS Gold Medal in 1943.

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Location & Climate Comparison

B. C. Klemm, 36 Barkly St., Maryborough, 3465 Victoria, Australia

How I look forward to receiving your *Bulletin* and reading of how other readers grow their tree peonies in various parts of the world (including Australia) and it usually causes me to reach for my Atlas to compare their geographical location and climate.

Though I am of limited qualifications and experience, it seems to me that certain types are more suited to certain environments, so I try to check out the various locations to compare their altitude, latitude, climate, and other factors to save myself from being disappointed when some will not grow, and to be rewarded with healthy plants more amenable to where they are planted.

My garden is about 440 feet above sea level, about 37 degrees south of the equator, 100 miles from the nearest sea, and a temperature that ranges from 0 degrees celsius on a frosty wintry morning to over 40 on a hot summer day. Natural rainfall is about 18 inches per year. With a little help from irrigation and fertilizers, it is a good area for growing vegetables and fruit.

This would not make it the ideal site for peonies, and it caused me great frustration until I went against the advice of the purists and decided to let Mother Nature show me the way. I just left it to the bees to select what they wanted, then plant the seeds and let the elements grow what they wanted and eventually came up with a magenta colored, semi-double that thrives in this area. I have one in particular that is flourishing in-between a navel orange tree and a grapefruit tree.

I have been condemned by some peony growers as growing seedlings of unknown parentage, but other local enthusiasts are keen to accept my freely-given cuttings and layerings to produce better blooms suitable for local conditions. I would be interested to see in your *Bulletin* what other growers think, and how they handle problems associated with conditions that are adverse to growing peonies generally available.

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PEONIES (*PAEONIA*)

Betsy Humphries, Sumter, SC, June '99

What a wonderful Spring this has turned out to be, in spite of the drought! And it is all because "Mrs. Timmerman's peony" has thirty-five buds, and they all appear to be healthy and hardy! By the time you read this article, they will have already bloomed, but I will take a photograph to prove that I am telling the truth. Peonies can grow in Sumter if you take certain precautions.

I must admit that last Spring this same peony only had three blooms, but there are just times that Nature takes its toll. Last year was one of those times.

The secret for success, if there is one, is to find old varieties of peonies which bloom early in the Spring. Varieties which belong in this category include **Festiva Maxima**, a double white with crimson in its center, **Mons. Jules Elie**, medium pink, **Sarah Bernhardt**, an apple-blossom pink, and **Felix Crousse**, a red. I have had success with **Big Ben**, a double red, **Festiva Maxima**, and **Daphne**, a double pink. All of these herbaceous peonies are older varieties, many introduced in the 1800's.

Mrs. Timmerman grew her peonies in a raised bed (which seems to be another secret of success—that is, good drainage). I rescued the one remaining stem of her original plant from beneath a fallen pine tree. Now when that peony blooms, it is worth the risk I took when I went into that yard without the owner's permission and rescued that stem!

Growing peonies in Zone 8 is difficult, at best. Older varieties and good drainage are certainly two important considerations. In addition, be sure to plant the buds of the plants just beneath the soil surface, only an inch or less of dirt over the eye. Allow for good air circulation by not crowding; this helps prevent the fungus which can destroy the peony's beautiful foliage. (This year I am using "Shield-All Organic Fungicide," which is available through Gardens Alive catalog.) Plant in the Fall for best results.

Virginia Bland, who grew beautiful peonies in Mayesville, attributes their success to the wonderful swamp soil which her mother-in-law had brought in to prepare the bed. Prepare the soil deeply with good organic matter below the depth of the peony's roots. If this is done, the plant will need little additional fertilizer. In the Spring, just after growth starts, give each plant 1 cup of bonemeal or 1/2 cup of low-nitrogen fertilizer, such as 5-10-10.

Since peonies need both sun and cold, remove mulch in Winter and add mulch in Summer. Try to provide at least half a day of sun, preferably morning sun, and protection from the hot afternoon sun. Some growers suggest planting on a northern-facing slope to provide cold. Mrs. Bland has observed that gardeners in Mayesville and Bishopville have been successful with peonies, but that Sumter may

be too far south.

Peonies like plenty of water, beginning in the Spring when new growth appears. Water every three to five days, providing a good soaking down to the bottom of the roots. Water early in the day to prevent disease. Be patient because it often takes peonies several years to mature and bloom.

Several years ago on a visit to Monticello in Virginia I saw a beautiful tree peony in bloom; it surpassed any other plant on the grounds. An article in the January-February 1997 of *Fine Gardening* on Chinese tree peonies, encouraged me to venture into the culture of tree peonies, which promise to grow and bloom in the South. I have two now, and will let you know how they turn out!

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Our Peony Garden

E. Mackerman, Center Point, Iowa

My peony garden began in 1961. I had a florist shop at that time, and found many older people wanted cut flowers over Memorial Day. I would give them a knife and tell them to help themselves. I can't tell you how many weddings we did as a result of this bit of kindness. We had a granddaughter say to me, "*You were so nice to Grandma. I want you to price out my wedding flowers.*"

Got "hooked" on peonies, started adding more varieties. I added 100 varieties from Brands in 1974. We presently have 400 varieties, including tree peonies imported from China. We have quite a few heirloom peonies on demand. One of my favorites is a pink **Mammoth Rose** (Franklin). We have selected some of our hybrid seedlings that hopefully we'll be registering with you in the near future.

As of last year, our oldest boy, Don, has joined our family Nursery, and hopefully will take over the operation when I retire.

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LETTERS

Peonies thrive in our garden in Maine. We have about 80 varieties now. I started planting them four years ago when we moved here from California. Raised in Chicago, I remember how much my Dad loved our hedge of peonies, just the usual kind: red, white, and pink. But how beautiful they were and how heavenly their scent. It was a bond we had, my Dad and I, our love of peonies.

Many years passed, I grew up, moved to a warm climate, and my Dad died much too soon. When we decided to live here amidst the lighthouses, boats and rocky shores, I knew at once that it was time to

get back to an old love, the glorious peony. We have purchased many varieties from American Peony Society members. Your ads are very helpful, and the stock provided by members is unfailingly robust.

Last summer our **Red Charm** plants burst into bloom, flowers the size of dinner plates! What a fragrance! I took some to the opening of an art exhibit and they stole the show. While just an amateur lover of the peony, I appreciate the skill, dedication and pure love that goes into your preservation and continuation of a plant many centuries old. When I see a Chinese painting featuring a peony, the thought that a flower can bridge cultures and centuries is humbling and intriguing.

—**Susan L. Martin, Ph.D.**, Tenants Harbor, Maine

This past year I had the most extravagant, beautiful blossoms from my **Anna Marie** tree peony (from Brothers Nursery in Oregon—Rick Rogers). This was a large consolation to me, for most of my species peonies, potted up, did not make it through a particularly hard (for this area) freeze [NW Washington].

I have learned that peonies if potted up, require excellent drainage AND more frost protection than peonies growing a-la-natural!

—**Maris**, Washington

The Shacksboro Museum in Baldwinsville, NY will note the tenth year of its peony beds with a celebration on June 3. The beds consist of over 60 plants with almost the same number of varieties. These plants originated either directly or indirectly from the Indian Springs Farms, a local nursery that specialized in peonies from the early 1920's to the mid-1940's. The farm was owned by F. A. Goodrich, and managed by Harry F. Little, a peony authority and a member of the American Peony Society Board, and President in the 1920's.

The beds at the Museum were a glorious sight to behold in 1999, and we are hoping, with the cooperation of Mother Nature, they will outdo themselves this year. As overseer of all aspects of this project, I am always looking for any information on the Indian Springs Farms (original or copies) if any member should happen upon it. Information on identifying old peony varieties from this time period is also greatly appreciated, since one of our goals is to be a resource for identification to local gardeners and all others who are interested.

I enjoy the *Bulletin* and appreciate all the effort that you put forth in publishing it. Thank you, and keep up the good work.

—**Doris Cross**, 212 Myers Road, Liverpool, NY 13088

When Wilds introduced **Judith Ann**, 30 or 40 years ago, they wrote a glowing report. 1999 was its first outstanding year for me. I like it as it has thick, sturdy red stems and shining green leaves. It is a huge blossom, that blooms late in the season, with such as **Dolorodell** and **Nick Shaylor**.

—**Les Wiley**, New York

Some varieties I have are at least 150 years old, since my mother and grandmother grew them on the farm where I have lived all my life. I am now 72. Last Fall we planted a few new varieties.

—**Ruth Helwig**, Neustadt, Ontario, Canada

A year ago I did not receive the best news. The property where I have 26 rows (each row 100 feet long) was sold to a new home buyer. My hunting & fishing friend who I have known for over 40 years sold his house. Now what? What would happen to my peonies?

Then I received good news! The people moving in said I could continue to own and maintain the peonies, and they wanted to have me leave them there. This Fall when my back was bothering me they cut down the peonies after frost, and removed the foliage without any assistance from me. That was a betterment to me, as I had to do it by myself over the years. They are fine people.

I love my peonies and it is a great feeling to be out in the patch before and during the bloom.

—**Jim Paulson**, Anoka, Minnesota

The best producer in my garden is **Karl Rosenfeld**. My peony garden is located on a sunny south-facing well-drained slope with rich Kachemak loam soil. Each July this established plant rewards me with 50-100 large blooms. I live at 1400' overlooking beautiful Kachemak Bay. Heavy rains are the biggest enemy of my peony blossoms.

We are losing many of our mature Lutz spruce trees (hybrids of White & Sitka spruce) to a population explosion of the spruce bark beetle. After removal of the dead trees, I had a mechanical stump grinder grind the stump & huge roots and mix it with the rich soil. To this acidic mound of chips and rich loam I added lime and wood ashes.

As an experiment I planted peonies, primroses and iris on this raised mount.

I should know how this works in 2 years. I only mulch my peonies with a cover of sand before their first Winter here. In Spring I carefully brush the sand away. This works well for me!

—**Daisy Bitter**, Alaska

I think of you often and remember your help and generosity so many years ago, when I wanted to learn more about peonies. My love of nature as a child—watching ants, baby birds, catching salamanders and lizards, parakeets, tropical fish, etc.—has turned into a love of gardening as a hobby. What a world of wonder that has been. When Cheryl and I travel we love to stop and discover new nurseries and new plants. This lifetime is just too short for all the beauty that can be found. But then, there is continuous discovery and ongoing excitement and interest.

Thank you for opening the peony world to us.

—With deepest regards,
Alex and Cheryl Moroz, Minnesota

Thanks for your letter that came with the renewal notice. I am sure that you are awaiting the emergence this spring of the red shoots of your beloved **Festiva Maxima**. This was the common white peony in the westside neighborhoods of Rochester, New York, when I was growing up there in the 1920's and 1930's. It was a great favorite of my mother, who used to gather big bouquets of **Festiva Maxima** and **Edulis Saperba** for her church. I love it still, of course; but there is not much room for peonies in my yard or the one next door that I also tend. Two doors away is a wonderful bush of **Festiva Maxima** that has flowered profusely in the front yard, in the middle of a lawn, since at least 1961 when I bought my house. The old retired engineer and his female relative who dwelled there have passed away long ago. Perhaps that's the reason why my partner, Bill, and I take a proprietary interest in this peony. The neighborhood has for more than twenty years become student housing, and of course the students who rent apartments and rooms in the old neighborhood houses have not time for gardening. Every yard gets worse with the years, lawns and gardens vanishing, while the new growth is that of weed trees, ailanthus, mulberries, maples. The parking situation is bad—so many cars to a house—and the practice of parking cars on lawns and gardens is widespread. Bill and I have been agonized to see such destruction, but there isn't much one can do in a neighborhood as it becomes a slum. Parking a car over the **Festiva Maxima** one year was the blow, and I determined to do something about it. I have placed a wire circular fence around **Festiva Maxima**, cut off the dead leaves each year, and water it during droughts. The young people do understand my concerns. After I had been carrying water to a Japanese cheoxy tree, young, planted one spring by an absentee landlord, during a long summer dry spell. I spoke to the students about the young tree, which they knew nothing about, and from then on they watered it. It's much larger now and flowers beautifully every May, but it's now threatened by weed trees that are growing vigorously.

Getting back to the **Festiva Maxima** plant, one student kept a golden retriever puppy, Winston, who kept digging up **Festiva Maxima**. Winston loved peonies, the roots as food, and did damage, too, in the yard next door to his, which I cultivate. He didn't destroy the plants, just dug up parts of them. After one of his attacks on **Festiva Maxima** I picked up two roots with eyes and planted them next door in the back—so much admired for their beauty that I gave one to my young student friend, Julie Davis, which flowered so well for her that she could not leave it behind and took it to her home in Washington State when she left Ann Arbor. I think that the old engineer would be pleased by the progeny of his beloved peony.

—Edward Weber, Ann Arbor, MI

In June the friends of the Farmington library sponsored a ten garden tour, which included my peony garden. The hostesses counted 350 visitors, many of the people said that they came on the tour especially to view the peonies. See what a peony will do— it gets people moving.

I have a nursery in one corner of my garden with a row of peonies alongside a row of daylilies. A couple of years ago I saw a peony growing in the middle of a daylily clump, which I let grow. This past summer it produced a four inch double lavender flower. In the fall I dug it up and transplanted it to a better location. Hope it will bloom next summer.

Best wishes for the next peony season.

—Walter Kulas, Farmington, CT

I do my peony gardening at my church. It's a small garden which contains **Festiva Maxima**, **Kansas**, and **Eleanor Roosevelt** and a few others.

The time I spent as a boy in Kansas led me to associate peonies with church yards and cemeteries as well as gardens. **Festiva Maxima** was grown to perfection by a kindly neighbor in Chicago where I grew up and I planted it to honor him. **Kansas** is named after a state I love and **Eleanor Roosevelt** was a woman I admired.

Best in 2000!

—Neil Grant, New Jersey

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Contributions toward garden preservation are appreciated.

How To Choose?

by Jack Nordick

Considering all of the different varieties of peonies available today, how can one possibly choose what to plant? In some situations I suppose the selection might be easy. If one is looking for a particular variety with which one is familiar; for example, a plant that grew in the yard of one's grandparents, then nothing else will do. It is just a matter of identifying the variety and locating a source. Or if one is blessed with unlimited resources to purchase and grow, one can simply plant everything one sees. Yet, considering the thousands of named varieties in commerce, that is not a totally realistic expectation for even the most interested of private estates nor the best of public gardens.

What then for us mere mortals? Supposing there is space for only one peony plant, or in any case, limited possibilities for plantings, how ever can we choose? Looking through catalogues gives a dazzling array of choices. Where can we ever start?

I suppose the best starting point is to tour blooming gardens. It was one such unexpected stop that introduced me to **Cheddar Cheese** which instantly became a "must have." If one is looking for a place to start, the list of society medal winners is foolproof. Any plant from that list would have to be a good choice. Talking to growers also gives ideas about their favorite varieties.

Perhaps one is partial to certain colors. One can never have enough pure white flowers. **Festiva Maxima** is an older introduction that is still top on any list. It is also readily available and among the least expensive. It also has attractive foliage and strong stems that look good in the landscape. It is a vigorous grower and a foolproof bloomer. The occasional red flecks only add to the flower's charm. If there is only room for one plant in your garden, and you like white, I would highly recommend this choice. Another good choice in a double white is **Elsa Sass**. This is best grown where it would get some afternoon shade as it is one of the late varieties that might fail to open when the sun is hot.

If red is the color of your choice, **Red Charm** is the best I grow. It has good form and blooming habit and outstanding color that lasts more than a few days. **Diana Parks** and **Alexander Woolcott** have also been recommended, but are difficult to locate, and higher priced.

Of the pink flowering varieties, the range is almost endless. I like the stronger colors in pinks. **Vivid Rose** is the favorite among the ones I am growing now, and **Sara Barnhart** is another. I happen not to like the light pink or "blush" varieties, but if that is what you happen to like there are so many. **Pillow Talk** and **Fairy's Petticoat** are the best I have seen.

The single varieties have their own charm and should not be

overlooked. **Topeka Garnet** and **Sword Dance** are spectacular in their own right. When **Machanic Grand** becomes more affordable, it has to be considered for any garden collection. **Requiem**, **Sanctus** and **Krinkled White** are white singles that have nice foliage as well as a "different" look.

Certainly any comments on selecting varieties would be incomplete without mentioning the newest species of intersectional and Itoh hybrids. Just one plant of **Bartzella** or **Garden Treasure** would make any garden distinguished.

The same can be said of all of the tree peonies. They are still so unique for most gardeners that any one is a good choice. It is largely unknown that they mostly are hardy in the coldest parts of zone four and tolerate alkaline soil very well. If you do not have one growing in your garden now and have the space, plant the first one you can find. The rewards will be incomparable.

There might be some varieties that might have a unique appeal for you. **Heidi** is one that has gotten my attention. The bright contrasting stamenoids on top of clean pink flowers is the most eye-catching combination I have seen in a peony flower. On the other hand, I very much dislike the bi-colors like **Top Brass** or **Raspberry Sundae**. However, perhaps there are just what you like the most.

That is what is so great about the Genus *Pæonia*. There are so many choices that everyone can pick a sure winner. From choices in bloom time, size and color of blossoms, flower form and foliage type, common to exotic, inexpensive to costly, easy to grow and demanding there is a variety that is right for every gardener.

So I would encourage you to take some time to look at Peony gardens this spring. Those of you who have the opportunity to attend the American Peony Society Exhibition in Milwaukee this June certainly should make the choice to do so. The best of all possibilities will be available for viewing there, as well as the hundreds of plants on the grounds of the Boerner Botanical Gardens.

My own little garden is well off of the beaten path on the South Dakota boarder. There is little traffic on the gravel road there, but when the Peonies are in bloom I see the cars slow down as they pause to gawk. Occasionally someone will drive in and remark about the spectacular vista.

So if there is room for only one or for a hundred, planting a peony is a sure way to make a garden statement. The only way to make a wrong choice would be to not include any peonies to your garden.

★ ★ ★ ★

HISTORY

Oriental Gold

by *George w. Peyton*

ORIENTAL GOLD NEW YELLOW DOUBLE HERBACEOUS PEONY

After several years of costly effort, it is our pleasure to announce the astonishing discovery of a new brilliant yellow double herbaceous peony. Its roots are yellow, stems are medium tall and strong bright green with darker foliage. It blooms with the late Japs and the early Lactiflora. The flowers are medium size, lemon yellow, fading lighter. It should be an excellent landscape variety and good for arrangements. The presence of hidden stamens may hold out great possibilities for hybridists. A few roots are offered for Fall delivery at \$100.00. The number of eyes are not guaranteed. Will ship 2 to 4 eyes. It will probably be several years before it can be offered again.

We are pleased to reprint the following article written by Mr. George W. Peyton, Secretary of the American Peony Society for the September 1954 Bulletin:

ORIENTAL GOLD, THE DREAM PEONY

Ever since peonies have been extensively grown, it has been the dream of originators to produce a double yellow herbaceous peony. From time to time, rumors have spread that the desired goal had been reached.

When the yellow tree peony, *Lutea*, was discovered in the closing years of the last century and its hybrids began to be placed in commerce, which were true double yellows, hopes ran high that its herbaceous counterpart would be found.

One of the earliest rumors in this country was that the late "Father" Terry, as he was affectionately called by his friends, had accomplished the seemingly impossible. In fact, the writer once had a letter from Mr. Meneray of Council Bluffs, Ia., stating that he had bought this plant for six hundred dollars, if my memory serves me right. He cut it into about twenty divisions and when it bloomed, it was a semi-double, so he threw it away. Such was the fate of a semi-double in those days! Whether this was really a yellow or just one of the numerous varieties we have today, with white or pink guard petals and a yellow center of small petals, no one knows now. Maybe we shall hear from someone who did see this plant as there must be many living now who did. At any rate, we never had the yellow peony.

The late Lee R. Bonnewitz was so much interested in it that he offered a prize of one thousand dollars in cash for a true double yellow, but as the years passed and no one claimed it, the offer was finally withdrawn. This would have been named C. S. Harrison, after one of our earliest members who was a dyed-in-the-wool peony enthusiast.

With the discovery of the creamy yellow **Wittmanniana** and the light yellow **Mlokosewitschi** in the Caucasus Mountains, hopes again mounted that the long-awaited yellow double would soon be with us. The story of the many attempts to gain this end has been told in the former Bulletins. To date, the greatest success along this line, has been achieved by Dr. White in his origination, the pale yellow single **Claire de Lune**, which we know was shown for the first time at Minneapolis this year. It is a variety of great charm and distinction.

For years the rumor has persisted that there was a yellow double in existence but all efforts to track it to its lair proved in vain, until Mr. Louis Smirnow, through his agents, finally obtained a few roots of what was reported to be that yellow. The plants from the first importation all died, I am told, and the second importation proved to be untrue. Then a third attempt was made, with the result that this year, at least one plant bloomed in the garden of Dr. David Gurin and one in Mr. Louis Smirnow's garden. And the search was ended, for it was a true yellow double.

Magazine editors, scientists and horticulturists came to see it. Color pictures were taken of it and I am under the impression that a bloom was shown at the Rose and Peony Show of the New York Mens Garden Club.

A dried specimen was sent to Col. F. C. Stern of England, the author of the latest monograph on the Peony, "A Study of the Genus *Pæonia*." He wrote Mr. Smirnow as follows: "I have received the dried specimen of your double yellow herbaceous peony. It is the most interesting I have ever seen and I have never seen anything like it. It is very good of you to send it. I am mounting it and sending it to the Herbarium of the British Museum in London. Here it will remain a permanent record of this wonderful pæony, which one has heard of, but never seen before in the Western World. My congratulations in obtaining it and I hope you grow it successfully and propagate it."

While no one knows its origin or the species from which it came, it is probably a hybrid, maybe of species still unknown, except to a few in its native country.

★ ★ ★ ★

Bangor Peony Garden Explodes with Color

by Jim Counihan, Staff Writer, The Weekly

The front of Ken Liberty's large white house on Ohio Street gives few clues to the treasures hidden in its backyard garden. Just a few steps around the corner of the east end of the house, however, is an explosion of color and scents. From May to July, peony blossoms of nearly every size, shade and hue, poke their heads from thick beds of green foliage.

Liberty is as much a collector as a gardener, and the love, patience, pride and care he puts into his backyard peony garden is evident.

"I have about 80 of the known, named varieties," he said. "These include many I've divided and replanted in different locations." Liberty's garden includes such varieties (and colorful names) as **Early Scout, Monsieur Jules, Eli, Battle Flag, Dragon's Blood, Festiva Maxima** and **Gay Paree**.

"Some of the older varieties were developed back in the 1800's," Liberty said.

"Maine's climate is good for peonies. They won't grow where it's extremely hot. They have to have a period of eight to 10 weeks of cold weather to prepare for growth during the next year.

"How long the blossoms last depends on the variety," Liberty said. "And how hot it is. When there's that terrible hot, humid weather, they'll go faster after than if we have mildly warm days and nice, cool nights. Typically, you'll get blossoms that last a week or two."

Many of the clumps of peonies in Liberty's backyard garden are identified by small metal tags. Others are unidentified, personal favorites. "Usually, I won't buy a peony unless it has a name."

He points to a huge blossom-bearing orange-yellow stamen. "This one is called **Cheddar Cheese**. The one over there is **Red Charm**, as you can see, it's a really big flower."

Red Charm, Liberty explains patiently is a variety known as a "bomb," a full double.

"The only problem with **Red Charm** is that it's a dark, deep red and tends to fade when it gets too much strong sun."

Small, scattered flecks of deep red mark a blossom bearing brilliant white petals. "That's a tell-tale sign that it's a **Festiva Maxima**," said Liberty. "It's very inexpensive when compared to some varieties of the old-fashioned or rare varieties."

The colorful backyard garden includes thick-stemmed tree peonies as well as the more familiar varieties. These are typically early-blooming species. "As you can see, this one has already gone by," said Liberty, examining the remains of a half-dozen blossoms.

One of the most unusual peonies in Liberty's backyard garden is a rare **Coral Peony**. Just coming into bloom, the mid-sized blossoms are an eye-catching and appealing mixture of colors creating a true coral tint.

Liberty lifted a drooping pink blossom. "This is one I rescued from an office building on Hammond Street," he recalled. "It was part of an impressive clump of peonies that had been out behind the building for years. One morning as I was going by, I noticed a bulldozer was getting ready to plow right through the middle of the whole business. I went back to the house, grabbed a shovel and dug it up. I don't know what variety it is, I just call it my Hammond Street Peony."

Liberty looked around his garden at the mass of colorful blossoms. "I developed an interest in peonies back when I was a teenager. A neighbor gave my mother some, but I had to go down to her house, dig them out and replant them. That's when I 'got bit'."

"I've put together this collection over the past 20 years. Before that, I would always have a few, but then we'd move. I'd have to leave behind many favorites. Finally, I became 'stabilized' at this house and I've been able to gather a number of varieties together."

Liberty's years as a gardener and peony enthusiast give him a broad base of knowledge and practical experience. "You'll notice many of the plants have one large blossom and two lateral blossoms that bloom later. Many people cut the laterals off. This makes the first, middle flower grow larger. This is what you would do if you were going to exhibit peonies. I leave them on because I want more blossoms and more color."

Liberty frequently speaks about peonies at garden clubs and other agricultural associations. He said, "I spoke to a garden club in Belfast a few years ago. When it came time for a question and answer period a woman asked me, 'Is it true you have to have ants to make your peonies bloom?' She was told that you need to have ants crawling around on your peonies, or they won't bloom. Actually, ants are there because of a sweet substance that forms on the buds.

"If it was true that you need ants to make peonies blossom, then I'd collect and sell ants to peony gardeners for a penny a piece."

Collecting and cultivating peonies can be an expensive hobby. Liberty pointed to a clump of green stems. The blossoms were early this year and had already gone by. "I paid \$60 or \$70 for just the root of this one. Obviously I was worried whether it would survive or not," said Liberty.

"If people are willing to settle for some of the older varieties, they can have a nice peony garden with many tried and true plants for very little money. But if they want to have something rare, or the very latest thing, they may have to pay up to \$150 for a root. Whether you go with the rare or the common varieties, in the long

run, with a reasonable amount of care, peonies will give you your money's worth."

Liberty said peonies are a long-lived plant. "Most peonies, particularly the older varieties, will outlast the people who plant them," he said with a chuckle. "Another great feature is they're almost totally disease-resistant."

"I've had fun with this," Liberty said. "I've been in this house about 15 years now, and some of the peonies were here when I moved in. The backyard didn't look much like it does today, however. I had to dig down deep and replace the soil with good loam, so when I planted new peonies they'd do well."

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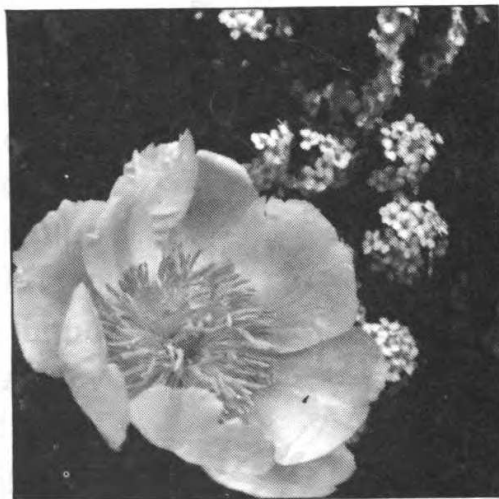
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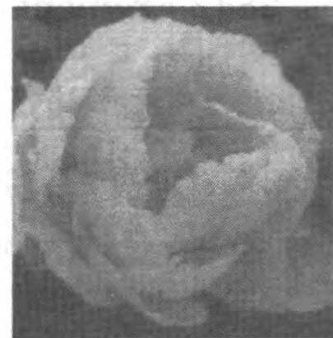
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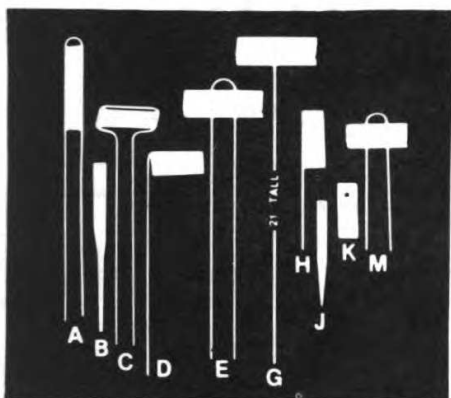
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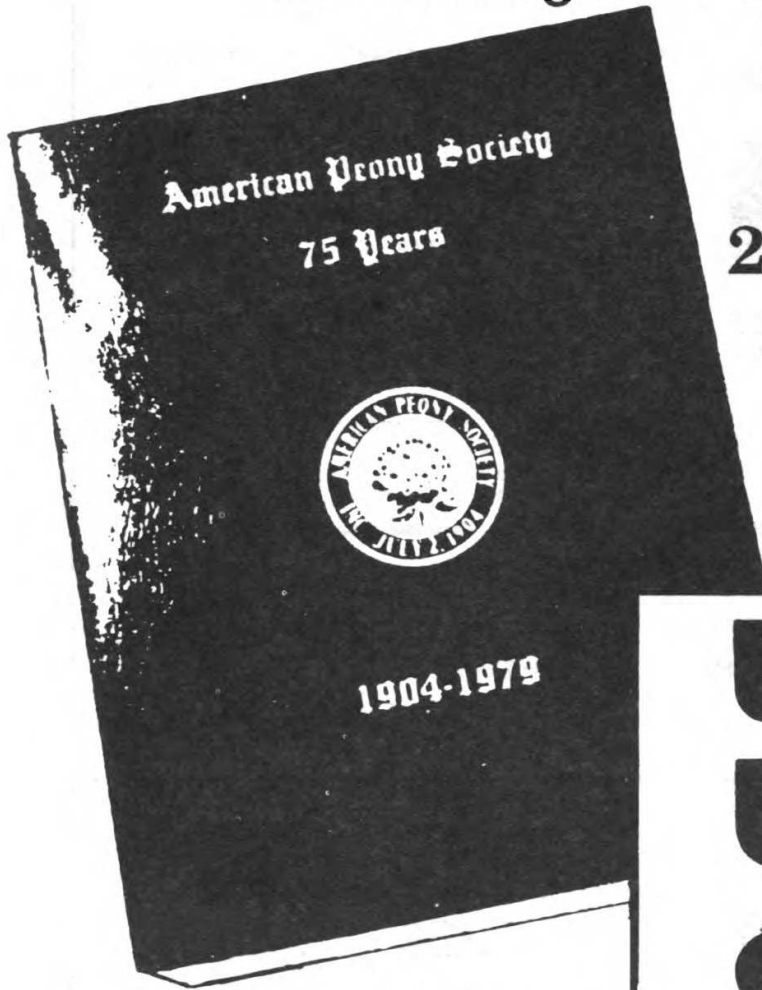
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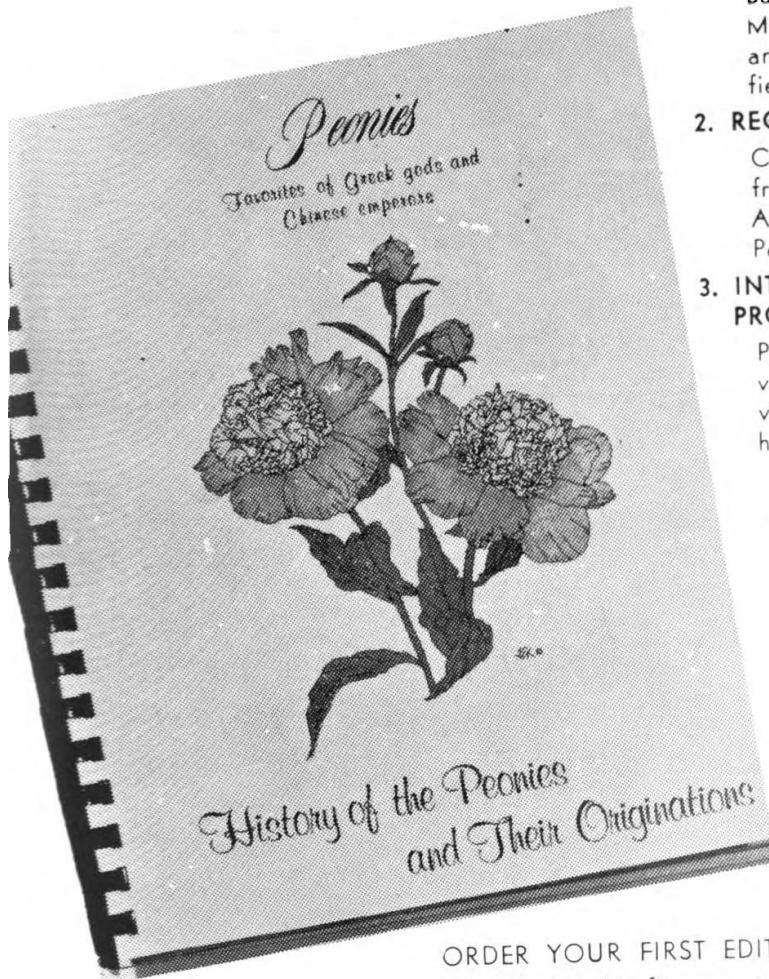
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