



Friends of the Central Experimental Farm

Spring 2014 Newsletter

Volume 26 No. 2

Peonies at the Farm

By Bill Wegman



R. Hinchcliff

'Nice Gal'

The presence of peonies at the Central Experimental Farm dates back to the 1890s and the early days of the experimental farm system in Canada, when the first director, Dr. William Saunders, assembled and planted a collection of 150 different cultivars for evaluation. It must certainly have been one of the most outstanding collections of peonies in Canada at the time and likely would have mainly consisted of the highly popular and wonderfully fragrant double *lactifloras*.

A broad representation of peonies

Today, the Friends of the Farm help maintain a collection of over 400 different named varieties and a total of 600 plants consisting of a wide variety of styles and types. The bulk of the current collection is a broad representation of peonies developed from the late 19th century on - the classic old French and English

peonies of Lemoine and Kelway. You may know some of them, such as 'Sarah Bernhardt', 'Le Cygne', 'Primevere', 'Baroness Schroeder' and 'Pride of Langport', to name only a few.

A collection of Professor A. P. Saunders' peonies has been deliberately assembled over the years. Now totalling 105 different cultivars, we believe it to be the largest such collection in Canada. Growing up in London, Ontario, and during his university vacations spent at the Farm in Ottawa, Professor Saunders would have learned the technique of cross pollination of flower blooms from his father, William, who experimented in plant breeding. Widely known and respected as a peony breeder, Professor Saunders was one of the first to use the then recently available species plants to produce earlier blooming varieties and to bring a wider spectrum of colours into the peony world.

The origin of one of the Farm's Saunders peonies is particularly closely connected to the Farm. In 1928 Saunders wrote that he had taken "some pollen of the species *P. coriacea* from a plant at the Experimental Farm in Ottawa, Canada" and used it on the *lactiflora* 'James Kelway' to get a true lavender coloured peony, which he named 'Lavender'.

In the 20th century, American nurserymen working concurrently with Saunders concentrated on producing the large doubles because that is what the market demanded at the time, cultivars such as 'Florence Nicholls', 'Gay Paree' and 'Red Charm'. Like the earlier French and English peonies, they were developed for the cut flower market, so their weak stems were not a great concern because they are cut earlier, at late bud stage and placed into cold storage.

Not all of these peonies were developed by professional nurserymen - some were produced by home gardeners whose cultivars are well represented in the Farm's peony garden. Nathan Rudolph of Aurora, Illinois, developed the peony 'America', which is likely our most outstanding red variety. And not all producers were men - Mrs. Mary Freeborn of Proctor, Vermont, registered 22 cultivars and the peony garden hosts her best two 'Angelo Cobb Freeborn' and 'Pico'.

Continued on Page 3

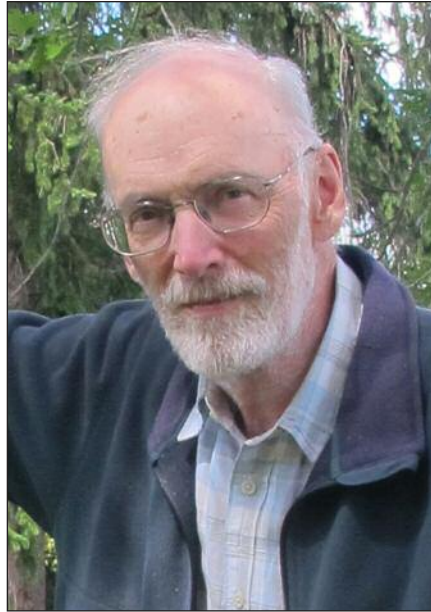
President's message - Note du président

A Prime Destination

There is renewed interest in making the Central Experimental Farm a prime destination for visitors to the National Capital Region. From spring to fall, the Friends of the Farm have projects underway to enhance visits to the Arboretum, Ornamental Gardens and the Merivale Shelterbelt, and with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada are planning new structures, benches, programs, information aids and plant areas under the 2017 program. AAFC is also developing tools such as a self-guided tour that will lead visitors around the Farm, pointing out highlights.

Other groups are also building public interest in the Farm. The reincarnation of the Agriculture Museum as the Canada Agriculture and Food Museum along with its Learning Centre is featuring and hosting more events and attractions. The Fletcher Wildlife Garden offers native gardens and tours to explore urban nature. Government groups (the National Capital Commission, Parks Canada) are developing information tools such as kiosks at the perimeter of the Farm.

The Farm's National Historical Site Management Plan, prepared in 2003, says



"... the Farm was originally designed in a period when public involvement was expected, and encouraged... the public community and the research community were meant to meet and interact in the core."

Flora Ottawa 2017

There is a new initiative to bring an international horticultural exhibition to Ottawa and to the Farm. The purpose of Flora Ottawa 2017 will be to promote horticultural business while putting on an extraordinary floral display attracting visitors and tourists. The exhibition sites include the proposed site for Canadensis Botanical Garden, south of Fletcher Wildlife Garden, as well as other local areas, and the show has the potential for launching Canadensis and creating more indoor attractions at the Farm.

If it goes ahead, Flora Ottawa will result in considerable new investment in infrastructure and alter transportation patterns around the Farm, leading up to 2017. This investment will need to be integrated with other features of the Farm to balance commercial interests with the natural setting and public access to existing areas. There's also a need to make improvements to the existing sites to prepare for the increase in visits.

We need to make sure that, as we move ahead with new initiatives, we preserve and enhance the priceless qualities of the Farm.

Une destination de choix

Un regain d'intérêt s'annonce pour faire de la Ferme expérimentale centrale (la Ferme) une destination de choix à l'intention des visiteurs dans la région de la capitale nationale. Du printemps à l'automne, les Amis s'engagent dans des projets destinés à mettre en valeur l'Arboretum, les jardins ornementaux et le brise-vent Merivale. De concert avec Agriculture et Agroalimentaire Canada (AAC) et dans le cadre du programme des Amis de la Ferme 2017, ils envisagent des travaux destinés à rénover les structures, les bancs, les programmes, les outils d'information et les aires végétales. AAC élabore également des outils, en particulier une visite auto-guidée qui mènera les visiteurs à découvrir les points saillants de la Ferme.

D'autres groupes également s'emploient à faire renaître l'intérêt du public pour la Ferme. Le Musée de l'agriculture et de l'alimentation du Canada, autrefois le musée agricole, ainsi que son centre d'apprentissage, affichent et présentent un plus grand nombre d'événements et d'attractions, dont certains en hiver. Au

Jardin écologique Fletcher, des massifs de plantes indigènes et des visites guidées permettront d'explorer la nature en milieu urbain. Des groupes gouvernementaux, de fait la CCN et Parcs Canada, travaillent à l'élaboration d'instruments d'information, soit des stands prévus à la limite de la Ferme.

Le Plan directeur du lieu historique national de la Ferme expérimentale centrale, élaboré en 2003, précise que « la Ferme a été conçue à une époque où la participation du public était souhaitée, voire encouragée... le public et la communauté scientifique devant se rencontrer dans la zone centrale ».

Flore Ottawa 2017

Une nouvelle initiative vient d'être amorcée et elle consiste à présenter à Ottawa et à la Ferme une exposition horticole d'envergure internationale. Flore Ottawa 2017 saura promouvoir l'entreprise de l'horticulture avec un étalage floral des plus spectaculaires qui favorisera la venue des visiteurs et des touristes. Les sites d'exposition incluront celui-là même prévu

pour le Jardin botanique Canadensis, au sud du Jardin écologique Fletcher, ainsi que d'autres secteurs des environs. En plus, un tel spectacle est de bon augure pour le lancement de Canadensis et la conception d'un plus grand nombre activités intérieures à la Ferme.

Si l'initiative va de l'avant, Flore Ottawa favorisera de nouveaux investissements de nature substantielle dans l'infrastructure et permettra de modifier les réseaux de transport aux alentours de la Ferme en prévision de l'année 2017. De là découle la nécessité d'intégrer ces investissements à d'autres fonctionnalités de la Ferme pour mettre en balance les intérêts commerciaux avec l'environnement naturel et l'accès du public aux secteurs existants. De plus, il faudra apporter des améliorations aux emplacements actuels en anticipation d'une hausse dans le nombre de visites.

Alors que nous passons à l'action avec de nouvelles initiatives, nous devons pourtant veiller à la préservation et au rehaussement des caractéristiques inestimables de la Ferme.

Eric Jones

Peonies at the Farm *(continued from Page 1)*

Canadian breeders have not been forgotten. The Farm's collection includes plants from Brown, Gilbert, Keagey, Brethour, Lossing, Ericson, Cousins and Ménard. Both 'Elgin', a peony developed by William Brown of Elora, Ontario, and 'Coral N' Gold' a peony developed by Lyman Cousins of London, Ontario, appeared on Canada Post stamps several years ago. In fact, the picture for the 'Elgin' stamp was taken from the Farm's own plant. Perhaps the best peony known to the Canadian public would be 'Adrienne Clarkson' named for a former Governor General and developed by Maurice Ménard of Laval, Quebec. Two other plants developed by Mr. Ménard and in the collection and dear to our hearts are the 'Mary Pratte' and the 'George Vorauer' peonies.

Itoh or Intersectional peonies were recently added to the collection. These are the result of a cross of tree peony and herbaceous peony and, although developed

in 1944, have only now become readily available to the home gardener due to advances in propagation. Itohs combine the colours and size of the tree peony blossom with the hardiness of the herbaceous peony. They are described in a separate article (Page 6) by Blaine Marchand.

The blooming season

The first peony to bloom at the Farm is 'Starlight' and, guess what, it is a Saunders peony and it is closely followed by 'Firelight' another Saunders peony.

This is usually by the third week of May. 'Red Charm', the reference peony, usually blooms by the 5th of June, while the big doubles don't bloom until the second and third weeks of June. By the end of June the bloom season is over, for an over-all period of five weeks of bloom - although admittedly sparse at the beginning and sometimes shortened by abnormally hot weather.

The blooming season is the best time to view the peonies but even without their blooms, the shapes of the plants and the configuration of their leaves are interesting. The collection is located in 14 beds at the north-east corner of the



R. Hinchecliff

'Adrienne Clarkson'

Ornamental Gardens beside the traffic roundabout, and in two more beds just to the north across the street in the campus sector. Some individual plants are located around the gardens and the Arboretum houses a large bed of duplicate peonies used as a reserve.

Passionate about peonies since the mid-1980s, Bill Wegman has led the Friends' peony team for over 10 years and runs the seed exchange for the Canadian Peony Society. He has won many awards at exhibitions with blooms from his own large collection.

Visit the Peonies!

Join Bill and his team for a tour of the Farm's peonies on Saturday, June 7.

Ideas and Tips from Master Gardeners

Here are the 2014 talks by Master Gardeners, to be held from 7 to 9 pm in Building 72, Arboretum, Central Experimental Farm. You can sign up for individual talks or the entire series. Individual talks: \$12 FCEF members, \$15 others. Series of five talks: \$50 FCEF members, \$60 others.

April 8 – Vegetable Growing Possibilities in the Urban Landscape by Judith Cox

This experienced vegetable grower will give ideas and tips on making the most of your vegetable space. Growing from seeds, companion plantings, succession planting, crop rotation, growing vegetables in pots and growing herbs, are some of the topics to be discussed. Also, what to do about common pests in the vegetable patch!

April 29 – Practical Pruning Techniques (yes you can easily tackle this gardening task!) by Lee Boltwood

With good hand tools this experienced Master Gardener assures you that you can do all the pruning in your garden yourself! Just follow basic principles and your plants will be healthier - and prettier.

May 13 – Trouble in Paradise: Common Garden Pests and Diseases by Caroline Dabrus

Even with the best care and attention, your plants will sometimes fall prey to insects or be undermined by disease and infection. What can you do to protect your plants from some of these problems and what if anything can you do to deal with these plant ailments? This lecture will focus on some of the common pests and diseases gardeners encounter and on what to do if your garden falls under attack.

May 27 – Water Gardening, the Final Touch to Your Landscape by Diane McClymont Peace

This talk will explore the benefits and challenges of water features, be they small and simple or massive, and present step-by-step details on siting, construction, maintenance, plants and fish and their care.

September 9 – Spring Bulbs, an Essential for Every Garden! by Mary Ann Van Berlo

Mary Ann will discuss naturalizing with bulbs and the use of minor bulbs, she will offer suggestions for uncommon bulbs that make a great addition to the garden, and she will share some ideas on forcing bulbs indoors. Planting, maintenance and pest control for spring bulbs will also be covered.

Upcoming Events

For more information, visit www.friendsofthefarm.ca or call 613-230-3276.

Craft and Bake Sale

- Saturday, April 26, 10 am to 4 pm.
- Take home the creations of area artisans and delicious baked goods.
- Location: Parking lot beside K.W. Neatby Building, Carling and Maple Drive, CEF.
- The Ottawa Food Bank will be onsite to collect donations.

Rare and Unusual Plant Sale

- Sunday, May 11, 9 am to 1 pm.
- Enhance your garden with plants from the many specialty growers and nurseries gathered for this event.
- Master Gardeners of Ottawa Carleton will be available to answer your questions.
- Location: Parking lot beside K.W. Neatby Building, Carling and Maple Drive, CEF.
- The Ottawa Food Bank will be onsite to collect donations.

Bus Trip to the "Great Gardening Weekend"

- Saturday, May 24, 8 am to 7:30 pm.
- One day bus trip to the annual show at Montreal Botanical Gardens.
- Over 100 exhibitors expected, selling plants, specialty foods, artistic garden wares.
- After the show, a stop at Montreal's spectacular Jean Talon Market.
- Cost is \$75 per person.

Tour of the Lilac Rows

- Saturday, May 24, 2 pm.
- Enjoy a guided tour of the CEF lilac rows with the Friends of the Farm lilac

team. Discover the many lilac varieties on display.

- Location: Macoun Garden, Ornamental Gardens.
- Free admission; donations gratefully accepted. No registration required.

Fletcher Wildlife Garden Native Plant Sale

- Saturday, June 7, 9:30 am to 12:30 pm.
- Find native plants grown in the area.
- Volunteers and growers available to answer questions and offer suggestions.
- Free admission and parking at the FWG.
- For more information, email fletcher@ofnc.ca or call 613-730-0714.

Preston Lilac Tour

- Saturday, June 7, 2 pm.
- Take a guided tour of the Preston Heritage Lilac Collection with the Friends of the Farm lilac team. Discover the variety of lilacs that Isabella Preston created at the CEF.
- Free admission; donations gratefully accepted. No registration required.

Peony Tour

- Saturday, June 7, 9 am to noon.
- Enjoy a guided tour of the peony beds at the CEF. Get tips on what would work best in your garden and ways to keep your peonies happy.
- The tour begins at the peony garden in the Ornamental Gardens.
- Free admission; donations gratefully accepted. No registration required.

Rose Workshop

- Sunday, June 15, 1 to 3 pm.
- A workshop on roses, rose pests and diseases at the Heritage Rose Garden. Information on the collection will be available to help with a self-guided tour of the roses. Bring a folding chair.
- Free admission; donations gratefully accepted. No registration required.

Book Sale

- Saturday, June 14 and Sunday, June 15, from 10 am to 4 pm.
- Come and check out the thousands of books. Stock up for your summer reading.
- Location: Building 72, Arboretum, CEF.
- Admission and parking are free.

Victorian Tea

- Sunday, July 13*, 2 to 4 pm.
- Classic tea served under the trees of the Arboretum.
- Bring a patio chair and listen to live music.
- Enter the best hat contest and don period costume (optional).
- Location: Building 72, CEF Arboretum.
- Admission and parking free; formal tea \$8.



Victorian Tea Times

Help Us Make a Difference

Join our volunteer teams this year in the Ornamental Gardens, Arboretum and Merivale Shelterbelt. Young or old, skilled or unskilled, there are opportunities for all to enjoy.

Gardening begins in early May so get your forms in. To obtain a volunteer form, please visit our website at www.friendsofthefarm.ca/volunteer.htm or call and leave a message for Donna Pape at 613-230-3276.

Volunteer Opportunity - Events Director

The Friends of the Central Experimental Farm requires a Director of Events to help plan and deliver a variety of fundraising events, including bake and craft sales, art exhibition, plant sale and Victorian Tea.

Experience in a non-profit setting working with volunteers preferred. Position requires good communication and organizational skills.

If you are interested in this opportunity, please send your resume to volunteer@friendsofthefarm.ca or by mail to Donna Pape, Director, Volunteers, Friends of the Central Experimental Farm, Building 72, Arboretum, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0C6.

Non-Dinner a Huge Success

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I wish to thank those who accepted our invitation to participate in the Friends of the Farm non-dinner in December.

Thanks to your generosity, we raised over \$5,000, which will help the Friends carry out their various projects this year.

I'm sure you would agree that all of us who did not attend had a wonderful time and, of course, saved all those taxi fares, tips, parking fees, baby-sitting fees and expensive drinks.

Bert Titcomb
Director, Fundraising

Lynne Zeitouni: Love at First Sight

By Mary Ann Smythe

To say that the Experimental Farm has played an important role in Lynne Zeitouni's life is no exaggeration. Almost from the moment she and her husband Sami arrived in Ottawa from the United Kingdom in 1969, the Farm became an integral part of their lives

As newcomers, they explored the city and when they discovered the Farm, it was love at first sight. "I always showed it to visiting friends and relatives," Lynne says, her voice reflecting her passion for the Farm. "It was a special place I wanted to show people and to enjoy as much as possible." Lynne's enjoyment included picnics with her husband after work on many a summer's eve.

Well settled in Ottawa, Lynne returned to school as a mature student. She graduated from Algonquin College as a social services worker and for nearly 20 years worked at the Anglican Social Services Centre 454, a drop-in centre for the homeless. When Lynne retired in 2002, she looked for something useful and enjoyable to do that was completely different from her career. Given her love of the Farm and of the outdoors, becoming a Friends' volunteer was an obvious choice. "I plotted and schemed to ensure I could make a commitment to the Friends of the Farm." She set aside Thursday mornings for one of the gardening teams, and also said she would help with fundraising events as needed. When Lynne discovered that only the Peony Team met on Thursdays, she was somewhat dismayed. "I knew nothing about peonies and had no interest in them. Actually, I had never really gardened and was intimidated by the prospect of working with experts."

Fast forward almost 12 years. Lynne, once hesitant gardener, is now a peony lover to the core. "I think it is a real hoot," she says of her transformation, which also includes a lifetime membership in the Canadian Peony Society (CPS). Almost immediately upon joining the Peony Team she was hooked. "I wanted to go to all the CPS national shows. It was so exciting and there was so much to learn." Lynne served as a judge's clerk at one of the shows, welcoming the chance to expand her knowledge. Within the Peony Team she has graduated from "assistant" to "chief cutter." She now cuts the flowers for the CPS shows that the team enters and has assistants who help with the painstaking task. "They presume I know what I'm doing," she laughs.

The team has won many ribbons at the shows, which speaks volumes for their collective expertise. Lynne is quick to credit Jean-Pascal (JP) Gratton, Supervisor of the Ornamental Gardens and Arboretum, for his support and appreciation of the team's efforts and accomplishments. She also hails Bill Wegman as a "great and knowledgeable" team leader, and pays special tribute to Mary Pratte, former team advisor, who was instrumental in maintaining the collection when the future of the Ornamental Gardens was in doubt, and who warmly welcomed Lynne to the



Polly McCoil

team and generously shared her knowledge and advice.

Beyond the Farm, Lynne's life is full. She and Sami travel together. She loves jewellery and is rarely without an eye-catching creation that draws admiration. As a volunteer with and member of the Ottawa Bead Society, Lynne makes some of her own jewellery, but confesses to buying more than she makes.

She is also an active member of Embellissement Vanier Beautification, a group that's helping to beautify the "colourful" neighbourhood that the Zeitounis call home. Lynne has adopted five planters, which boast an array of peonies donated by Bill Wegman. Peony Team member and CPS Past-President Blaine Marchand also offered mature roots from his own collection, some of which stand guard over the small Vanier Cenotaph.

On a frigid January morning when one wonders if there is life under the frozen ground, Lynne is already looking forward to seeing her favourite peonies in bloom. Their beauty still astounds her and she is wowed by the fact that she has had a hand in creating that beauty. "I feel I'm doing something worthwhile, not just filling time," Lynne says of her work on the Peony Team, "and also helping to safeguard the future of the place that has brought me so much joy. But I also do it for my own pleasure. I'm doing something I like in a place I love with people I enjoy."

Among the dozens of other volunteer profiles by Mary Ann Smythe was one of Bill Wegman in our Spring 2010 newsletter.

Patience, Perseverance and Itoh Peonies

By Blaine Marchand

"Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet." - Aristotle

How applicable is this maxim to the creation of the Itoh peonies, also known as intersectionals, crosses between a tree peony and an herbaceous one. Hybridizing of peonies has a long illustrious history, but the genesis for the introduction of intersectional peonies has its origins in the early 1900s with initial hybridization experiments of breeders Victor Lemoine and Louis Henry and later Professor A. P. Saunders (whose family connection to the Central Experimental Farm is well known and whose hybrid peonies have a formidable presence in the Farm's collection).

*"The strongest of all warriors are these two
— Time and Patience."*

Leo Tolstoy (War and Peace)

It was in 1948 that Toichi Itoh, a Japanese hybridizer - and a most patient person indeed - hit gold. Rumours persist he attempted over 2,000 crosses before succeeding with a cross between the *lactiflora* peony, 'Kakoden', and the tree peony, 'Alice Harding'. The result was seven seedlings that had the tree peony as their dominant characteristic. Unfortunately, Dr. Itoh did not live to see his seedlings bloom.

These intersectional hybrids, that bear his name Itoh, have lush magnificent paper-like blooms, reminiscent of those of the tree peony, but the abundant foliage of an herbaceous peony. They do not require staking and rain does not weigh down the blooms. Itohs, like herbaceous peonies, need to be cut down each autumn and as buds are set below ground, they are winter hardy, a bonus for Ottawa's climate. The intersectional peonies come in a range of magnificent colours - yellow, pink, maroon, fuchsia and multicoloured. When in bloom, the Itoh peonies in the Farm's Ornamental Gardens consistently stop people in their tracks.

Introduction to North America

In the 1970s, an American breeder, Louis Smirnow, negotiated with Dr. Itoh's widow to introduce four of her husband's peonies into North America. These he had named: 'Yellow Crown', 'Yellow Dream', 'Yellow Emperor' and 'Yellow Heaven'. Peony aficionados were smitten. But these peonies, initially scarce, came with a steep price tag. They were largely sold to peony enthusiasts or obsessive buyers.

Other hybridizers in the United States - Roger Anderson, Don Hollingsworth, Donald Smith and Irene Tolomeo to name a few - continued the work of Toichi Itoh on intersectional hybridizing. They created some truly sensational peonies. In Canada, Serge Fafard, of Les Jardins Osiris, also breeds intersectionals.

Itoh propagation

As Itohs are derived from tree peonies, they produce an expansive root system that makes root division, the usual way to obtain new peony plants, a tough job and all too frequently results in few new plants that then take years to reach maturity and produce blooms. One alternative, of course, is to graft the intersectional to a nurse root of an herbaceous peony, which, like a parent, provides food and strength until the intersectional roots are set and strong enough to take over.



'Julia Rose'



'Sequestered Sunshine'

Mary Pratte's Favourite Peonies

Mary Pratte, former advisor to the Friends of the Farm peony team, presented her favourite peonies in the January 2014 issue of *OHS News*, the newsletter of the Ottawa Horticulture Society. "While it is almost impossible," she wrote, "to pick only a few favourites from the thousands of peonies available these days, there are some which really make my heart beat faster."

To become a member of the society and read the *OHS News*, go to the website at www.ottawabort.org.

Another option is micro-propagation, which is essentially growing plants from tissue or cell culture under controlled conditions. The result is Itohs that can be produced quickly and offered to buyers sooner at a more affordable price.



'Magical Mystery Tour'. A bloom from this Itoh peony was a first place winner at the 2013 Canadian Peony Society (CPS) show



'First Arrival'

Itohs at the Farm

In 2009, the Canadian branch of Plantek International, which is one of the leading micro-propagation companies, contacted Mary Pratte, advisor to the Friends' peony team, with a very generous donation of 24 plants. Among these were benchmark Itohs - 'Smith Family Yellow', 'Going Bananas', 'Sequestered Sunshine', 'Singing in the Rain', 'Yankee Doodle Dandy', 'Cora Louise', 'Magical Mystery Tour' and 'Julia Rose'.

"He that can have patience can have what he will."

- Benjamin Franklin

A walk through the peony garden in 2014 will show that the number of Itohs in the Farm's impressive collection has grown to 42, with 26 different named varieties. Among these is Serge Fafard's wonderful 'Osiris Tourbillon'. But also among them are la crème de la crème - Roger Anderson's 'First Arrival' and 'Julia Rose', Donald Smith's 'Morning Lilac', and Don Hollingsworth's 'Garden Treasure'. A look at these peonies underlines that patience and persistence do indeed bring sweet rewards.

A happy member of the Friends' peony team since retirement, Blaine also tends to a collection of over 500 peonies in Osceola, Ontario. Past president of the Canadian Peony Society and editor of its newsletter, Paeonia Nordica, he is the author of eight books.



'Smith Family Yellow'

For More About Peonies

Join other peony lovers at the Canadian Peony Society. The latest issue of the Society's quarterly newsletter *Paeonia Nordica* includes a charming account by Anne Johnston, a scientist at the Central Experimental Farm, of the fun she's had so far hybridizing peonies. We look forward to reading about her first flowers this year.

To learn about the CPA visit the website at www.peony.ca.

Edible Peonies?

"In the fourteenth century, peony roots were deemed a food fit exclusively for kings ... In China, the fallen petals are parboiled and sweetened as a teatime delicacy. Blown petals add haunting perfume to a summer salad."

(www.epicurean.com)

And what about peony cookies for a teatime treat? Come to our Spring Craft and Bake Sale on April 26 and buy one, or a set of four, at the Friends' table. Quantities will be limited, so come early!

Stereo (and other) Views of the Farm

By Richard Hinchcliff

Beverley Brown of Ottawa remembers when she was a child at her grandmother's house, looking through a viewer at stereo pictures. She has a box of those stereo picture cards now and looks forward to showing her grandchildren "the iPad of their great, great grandparents' day."

The viewer (known as a stereoscope) originated in the 1850s. It has two lenses for the viewer and a stand to hold the picture card (stereogram).

A few of Beverley's stereograms feature the Central Experimental Farm in the early 1900s. There are the stately homes of the director and dominion cerealist, and a fascinating set showing the Dominion Observatory under construction.

Stereopticon and magic lantern shows

A social club was started in 1891 for those living on the Farm. Meetings were held every two weeks during winter months. Sarah Agnes Saunders wrote in 1895 in the *Ottawa Journal* that, although someone usually spoke about what they were working on, "... at times the programme assumes a lighter character ... occasionally we have an evening of music, readings or a stereopticon entertainment for which we are indebted to some kind friend in the city."

Despite its name, the stereopticon had nothing to do with stereo images for 3D viewing. It was a "Magic Lantern" projector with two lenses that allowed one image to dissolve into another during a show.

Magic lanterns using glass plate slides originated in the 17th century. Photographs began to be used in the 19th century and the stereopticon projector was another step forward. Not all magic lanterns, however, were stereopticons. The more common version had just one lens.

Magic lantern slide shows were a popular educational tool for the experimental farms of Canada. In 1929, over 100 sets of slides were distributed. For example, at a horticultural society meeting that year in Beaverton, Ontario, 800 adults watched a slide show, comprising 200 slides on home beautification. Photos of the Ornamental Gardens and its flowers would have been included.



Norman Rockwell's boy is captivated by the 3D experience of a stereoscope

Stereo slides

A new version of the stereogram became popular in the 1950s. Cameras were produced that used 35 mm film to take stereo photos, which were mounted for use in a special 3D viewer.

Dr. Walter S. Barnhart used one of these cameras to take stereo colour slide photographs at the Farm in about 1950. There are shots of the Ornamental Gardens, one photo of the Dominion Observatory, and one intriguing view in the Arboretum (see next page).

The delightful set of glass-mounted slides is in the photo collection of Michel Lafleur, photo historian, collector, and former *Le Droit* photographer. There are dozens of slides of Europe where, Michel suspects, Dr. Barnhart travelled in connection with his profession as a medical doctor specializing in respiratory ailments.



This stereogram from Beverley Brown's box depicts the residence of the dominion cerealist, in the early 1900s

Ten Acres Added to the Arboretum

The Arboretum expanded by 10 acres after World War II, when land south of Dow's Lake alongside the canal was reclaimed. The project began in 1946.

The view in the photograph to the right, taken in the Arboretum around 1950 is southeast from the southern lookout. There is a picnic in progress under the crabapple tree and a red canoe on the water.

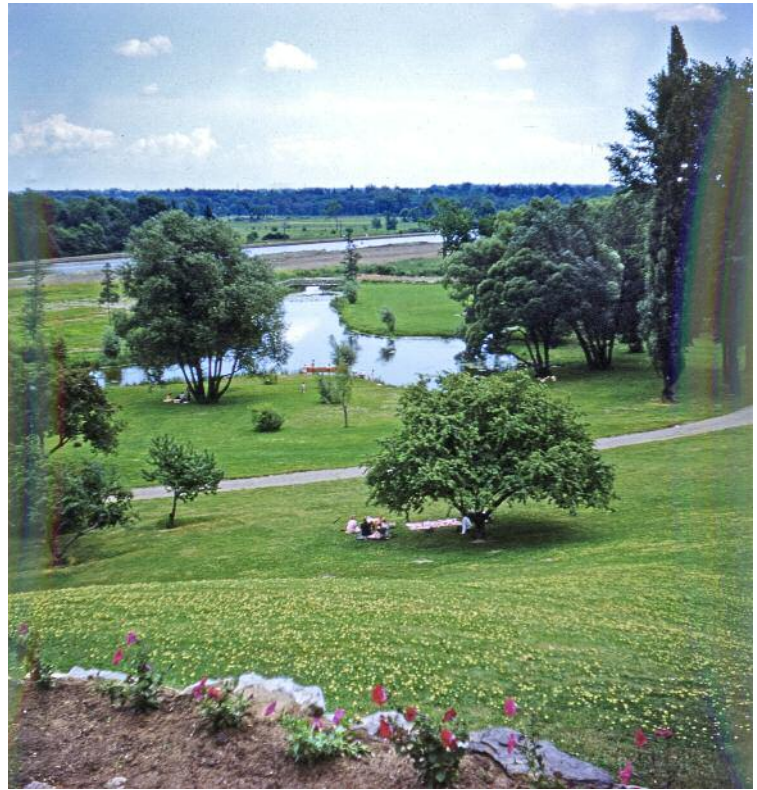
In the far distance alongside the canal is the recently reclaimed land, yet to be planted. The canal was dredged and the fill used in what had been a swamp.

"The project is the clearing and filling-in of a 10-acre extent of swamp land, which for many years has been an eyesore, a breeding-ground for mosquitoes and other insect pests, and a source of weeds which are said to have been killing fish in the Rideau Canal and have impeded navigation." (*The Ottawa Journal*, November 5, 1946)

The 'Rideau', a government vessel, dredged the canal. A retaining wall was built to close off the area, which, when filled, gave additional acreage to the Arboretum. It was noted that "great masses of willows and alders" would be "cleared from the marsh, leaving only a few tall tamarack trees standing."

The three aerial photos below are of the same area in the Arboretum in 1930, 1950 and 2011. Dr. Barnhart took his photo from the lookout in the upper left. The light coloured area in the 1950 photo is part of the reclaimed land. The 1930 photo shows the canal shore before the landfill.

(With thanks to Michel Lafleur)



Col. Michel Lafleur

View of the Arboretum c.1950. Photo by Dr. W. Barnhart



NAPL A2181-61 and A12174-26; Google Earth



The Friends of the Central Experimental Farm is a volunteer organization committed to the maintenance and protection of the Ornamental Gardens and the Arboretum of the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Membership in the Friends of the Farm costs \$25 per year for an individual and \$45 per year for a family, \$20 Seniors/Students. Membership fees support the many projects of the Friends of the Farm.

The Newsletter (ISSN 1702-2762) is published four times a year (Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall) by Friends of the Central Experimental Farm. All members receive the newsletter and it is sent either by regular mail or e-mail. Editor: Richard Hinchcliff. Assistant Editor: Barbara Woodward. Design & Printing: Nancy Poirier Printing. Contributors: Mary Ann Smythe, Bill Wegman, Lynne Zeitouni. Translator: Lise Anne James.

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Featuring the Farm's Magnolias

As mentioned by Bill Wegman (Page 3), Canada Post's flower series of stamps in 2008 featured the peonies 'Elgin' and 'Coral N' Gold'. Last year, magnolias were on the stamps. And again, the images were captured at the Central Experimental Farm.

Stamp Design Manager Danielle Trottier had long wanted to celebrate the magnolia as part of this flower series of stamps, according to the Canada Post website. "We have featured indigenous flower varieties and hybrids developed for the Canadian climate, and magnolias fall into the latter group. But a lot of Canadians would be surprised to learn how many varieties of this southern flower can flourish here."

Photographer and designer Isabelle Toussaint visited the Farm in May 2011 and photographed a number of the typical white and pink magnolias. But "we wanted to show a less known variety of flower in the stamp duo. We learned that the rarer yellow magnolias would bloom two weeks later, so I made a second trip to photograph them on a beautiful sunny day. The choice was so vast that we could pick three more hybrids for the souvenir sheet, the Official First Day Cover and the inside of the booklet."

The two magnolias selected were 'Yellow Bird,' which, when closed, according to Canada Post, "is reminiscent of a tulip waiting to bloom," and 'Eskimo,' with its



'Yellow Bird' and 'Eskimo'

Canada Post

"large cup flowers in white with a hint of lavender." The magnolia chosen for the Official First Day Cover was 'Leonard Messel', a favourite at the Farm, especially the beautiful specimen in the scented border at the Ornamental Gardens.

Isabelle adds, "Since the magnolia is a tree and the flowers extend beyond the leaves, there was a bare effect, so I chose to keep the sky in the background, on both the stamps and the other collectibles."

The magnolias were the latest in a series of flower stamps. Lilacs and sunflowers, as well as peonies, were photographed at the Farm for stamp sets in previous collaborations between staff at the Arboretum and Ornamental Gardens and Canada Post.

Great Gardening Weekend at Montreal Botanical Gardens

The first bus is sold out! We are now taking reservations for the second bus!

Our one-day excursion on May 24 promises to be a lot of fun. Over 100 exhibitors await us with their plants and specialty foods at the Montreal Botanical Garden's annual Great Gardening Weekend. A stop at the spectacular Jean Talon Market on our return journey is the bonus of the day.

The response has been excellent. Don't miss a seat on the bus. Make your reservation by calling 613-230-3276 or go to the Events page on our web site to download the reservation form. Don't delay, call today!

Denise Kennedy

NEW MEMBER REGISTRATION FORM

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Please make cheque or money order payable to: "Friends of the Farm." A receipt for income tax purposes will be issued for all donations of \$10 or more.
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INTEREST IN VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

YES NO

Selecting and Preparing Blooms ... *(continued from Page 12)*



Show room at Rosemère, 2013

much more delicate and this needs to be taken into consideration. Experience counts when cutting tree peonies!

- *Itoh peonies*: their petal texture is more substantial, which means these peonies produce excellent cut flowers as well as show blooms. When their pointed buds show colour and are marshmallow soft they can be harvested.

Cold storage to delay blooming

Once cut, trimmed and tagged, a bud is placed upright into a bucket and then put in cold storage to await show day. Cut peonies can be stored in cool temperatures (around 1-2 degrees C.) for several weeks, either:

- uncovered, stems in 2-3 inches of water, in a 'beer' type fridge (not frost free) and there needs to be moisture in the air to prevent the flower from drying out; or
- dry, wrapped in dry newspaper and inserted into a good quality plastic bag

that is well sealed. The flowers will produce some moisture within the bag, but the paper will absorb any excess moisture so the buds do not come in contact with

wet plastic. The outer cover could be either an old bread bag or a plastic bag from a newspaper without holes.

Presentation

On the day of a CPS show all the careful selection, cutting and storing pays off during set-up for presentation when time is limited. Exhibitors are required to bring in and prepare their blooms early in the morning before 10am. Judging takes place between 10 am and 1 pm, after which the doors are open to the public and exhibitors can finally see how they've done.

In setting-up, the first step is to place the blooms in the individual vases provided. This is the time to examine each bloom, because not all will have survived storage and/or opened to perfect form, which is why it's important to have more than one bud from each cultivar. Bill looks for blooms that are just about to reach their peak in opening, noting that "there are no ribbons for blooms that open tomorrow or those whose petals fall before the judges' eyes, but believe me

this happens. I look for blooms that are symmetrical, have good colour and stand out from the others."

Bill observes that presenters vary in their approach: some choose quickly and take their chances, while others take a long time to set-up, "as though their lives depended on their choices." Once a bloom is chosen, an entry tag is filled in and attached, showing the name of the bloom and the class entered. The exhibitor's name is written on the bottom of the form, which is then folded so that the exhibitor's name is hidden from the judges. There is a parallel series of classes comprising three blooms (of the same variety) in a vase. Naturally, the key to success here is to have three equal-sized blooms, which is difficult to achieve but a joy to behold. As Bill says, "all in all there is a lot of work in preparation, but the results are a delightful sight and well worth the effort."



'Cora Louise', an Itoh that was a first place winner for the Farm at the 2013 CPS show

A Friend's Outstanding Garden

Congratulations to Kate Harrigan and Bill Collins for their award-winning garden last year. Each year, the Trillium Award is presented by the Ottawa Horticultural Society to the most outstanding front yard garden in a specific postal code area of the city. In 2013, the area chosen included Kate and Bill's Parkdale Avenue home, and their garden was the winner.

The purpose of the award is to recognize efforts by citizens to beautify Ottawa neighbourhoods through their gardens. From spring to fall, front yard gardens are viewed from the street and judged on their overall design including bed layout, framing, balance, variety of plant material, colours, condition and maintenance.

Tree peonies are a special feature of Kate and Bill's garden. After consulting other peony experts, Blaine Marchand believes that Kate's tree peony in the photo is 'Shima-nishiki', or fire flame, a striped peony with split colour petals.

Kate recently launched our monthly "Farm Notes" e-mail, which keeps us up-to-date with Friends' events and activities. If you have not received it, please let us know at news@friendsofthefarm.ca or call us at 613-230-3276.



Peony 'Shima-nishiki'

Selecting and Preparing Blooms for Shows (and Your Home)

By Bill Wegman and Lynne Zeitouni, with technical advice from Mary Pratte

The Farm's entry in the 2013 Canadian Peony Society's annual show in Rosemère, Quebec, was a great success. Friends of the Farm peony team volunteers Bill Wegman and Lynne Zeitouni collected, prepared and entered a wonderful selection of peonies that won 21 ribbons: seven firsts, five seconds, five thirds and four fourths. Two of the first place flowers were sent to the head table for consideration in the Best of Show selection. This is currently our best showing "at least for now" says Bill. Both he and Lynne are happy to share their expertise on choosing, cutting, storing and preparing blooms for a show, and as Lynne notes, "One can do exactly the same thing for home-cut flower use."

Interestingly, an earlier CPS annual exhibition - held at Rideau Hall in 2001 - coincided with Bill and Lynne's involvement on the peony team. That's where Bill's entry, 'Doris Cooper,' won Best in Show and he met Mary Pratte, who introduced him to the Friends' peony team, which he now leads. Bill attends as many of the CPS shows as he can, saying the experience is rewarding for "the beauty of the blooms, the surprise and delight on people's faces when they see the judging results, the story telling and the serious discussions among peony lovers."

For Lynne, 2001 was the year she began volunteering on the peony team and the year she attended her very first CPS show. She vividly recalls the CPS presenting the then Governor General with "a beautiful yellow, Canadian-bred hybrid peony (Ménard/D'Aoust) named 'Adrienne Clarkson'." Since then, Lynne has been to every CPS annual show within reasonable travelling distance of Ottawa.



Bill Wegman putting final touches to the 2013 peony entries from the Farm



R. Hinchcliff

'Bordeaux'. A flower from this peony was placed on the head table and considered for 2013 Best of Show

And for the past two years she has cut winning blooms from the Farm's peony collection for entry in the CPS's annual show.

Lynne says it's possible to use the same selection, cutting and storage techniques for home-cut flowers and, while "cutting and storing peonies for show or personal use may sound a little intimidating, these flowers are very forgiving and it is worth the effort."

Selecting and cutting buds

In general, blooms can be cut up to three weeks in advance and held in cold storage, which allows the earlier blooming single and Japanese types to be shown alongside the semi- and double varieties that open later. Bill stresses the importance of cutting at early bud stage. "For short-term storage and with most double flowers it's better to cut flowers when in the soft bud stage. Many single-form flower types open more easily and thus the buds ought to be firmer." While bud selection is a trial and error process, if you follow the tips noted below, Lynne says, "you will certainly be rewarded with glorious blooms that potentially receive award ribbons or give pleasure at home for a surprisingly long time."

For all varieties, Lynne advises:

- take no more than 1/3 of buds or blooms per plant, otherwise you decrease growth for the following year
- cut a 14 - 16 inch stem above a set of leaves that will allow for a stem of 12 inches when making the final cut
- cut buds in the morning, preferably on a cloudy, dry day; moisture on the petals might cause unsightly browning
- side buds are not left on show blooms; they can be pinched off early in the season or carefully removed very close to the stem just before displaying.

Notable similarities and variations between specific herbaceous, tree and Itoh peonies include:

- *Herbaceous peonies:* single, loose anemone (full) and Japanese peonies should be cut as the bud shows colour. Anemone, semi double and double types ideally should be chosen when the bud feels like a soft marshmallow. Very full doubles need to be slightly more open on the stem before selection as they will either never open or take a very long time before they open completely.
- *Tree peonies:* in general, the bud selection is the same as for herbaceous peonies, however, their flowers are

Continued on Page 11