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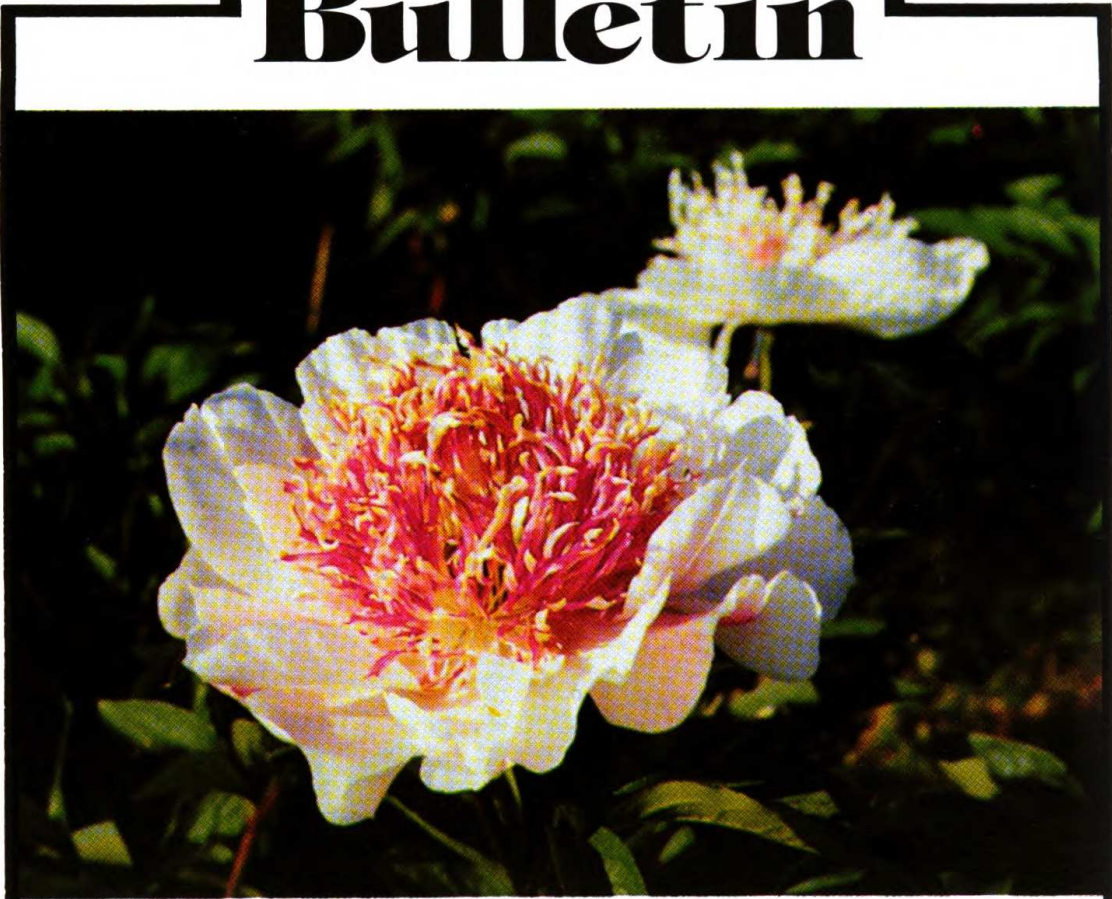
December 1993

NO. 288



# The American Peony Society Bulletin

DEC 07 93



*Do Tell* (Auten 1946)  
Photographer, Hermann Krupke  
(From his garden—Ljung, Sweden)

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

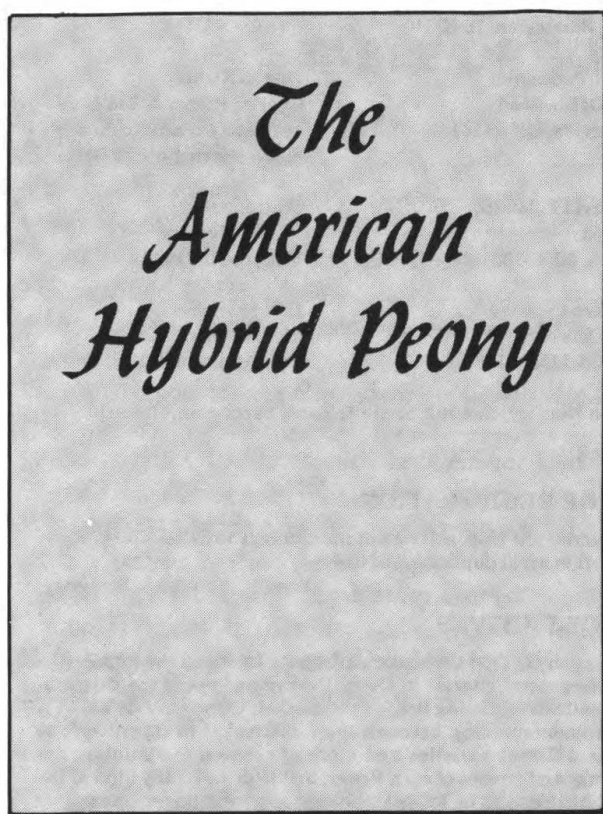
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The department was formed to properly supervise the nomenclature of the different varieties and kinds of peonies. All new varieties should be registered to avoid duplication of names.

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

December 1993 — NO. 288

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends:

Inasmuch as most of we peony enthusiasts live in the temperate zones of this planet, the influence of the changing seasons has a lot to do with what we do and when.

Concerning what we do with plants, the 1993 Spring and Summer has been extraordinary. In North America it must go down as a year of weather extremes—the Midwest extremely wet, extremely dry in parts of the East. However, we find ourselves being flexible and we adapt as the season demands. Thankfully, seasons pass and weather changes. Things get done or else they wait for another year.

Soon the holiday season will be completed and there will be time for anticipating the upcoming gardening year. And what an anticipation it is!

At this state of my life cycle, it is becoming easier to spend a bit of time in contemplation. One result is that I have come to realize there is a rising crescendo in the advance of Springtime which can be entirely captivating. Peonies, of course, play a large role beginning when their colorful shoots break into growth and until at last their unrivaled flowers provide the ultimate climax. I was recently reminded how the Spring of 1993 was a typical example.

Some garden visitors had video-taped the peonies as we walked through, and recorded our conversation. Eventually they favored me with a copy of the tape, but not until late in a Summer dominated by emergencies. What a break, to be reminded of the exuberance of Spring, and in our own garden! It wasn't just the peonies, but also the birds. Their singing seemed to almost drown out the conversation at times. It was astounding to realize this could be so soon so far out of mind. (By the time I saw and heard the tape, both the birds and I were busy trying to keep up with what we had previously commenced, and doing so without much song!)

At last, past age 65, I have come to realize that what makes a gardener of me is this exuberance of Spring. At that time the Creation is all around us and difficult to ignore. We are at once observers and participants in the miraculous events of life and our very existence comes more easily into perspective. Thankfully, we enjoy the relative freedom from conflict that makes it easier to appreciate.

Best wishes to all for a happy holiday season, and for a productive and enjoyable 1994.

Don Hollingsworth

# PEONIES AT THE ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS

*Detroit, Michigan (See picture on back of Bulletin)*

It was in 1990, when the Zoological Gardens offered plots of ground, made ready for planting to any organization or Garden Club that wanted to plant their flower and maintain the beds.

Mr. Harris Olson of Birmingham, Michigan, a civic leader with a profound interest in peonies, daylilies and flowers, took advantage of the offer and arranged to have two beds for display of peonies. The two beds were nine feet wide and 108 feet long of which he planted 200 peony roots.

These beds are under planted with daffodils and later bordered with annuals, so they give a full season of color, from Spring until frost—a very beautiful arrangement and enjoyed by the many people that visit the gardens.

Generous members of the American Peony Society did donate many plants. Mr. Olson personally completed the beds with his own donations.

He has also planted over one hundred fifty varieties of tree and herbaceous peonies at the Congregational Church in Birmingham, Michigan, making it an arboretum that is open to visitors at any time. In addition, many hundreds of daylilies add to this beauty. He maintains both gardens, devoting his time to these projects. This planting is over fifteen years old.

To the members of the American Peony Society that donated peonies for the Zoological Gardens, he sends his personal thanks with the comment that the peonies are so enjoyed, the plants are now large and full of bloom. The beds are very beautiful all through the growing season.

To you, Mr. Olson, we extend words of praise and appreciation for your dedicated work with peonies and flowers.

## PEONY SEED DISTRIBUTION

**Write: Chris Laning, 553 West F. Ave., Kalamazoo, Michigan 49004**

**Peony seed free — \$2.00 for postage and handling**

The list of seeds which are available for distribution are as follows:

1. Sable x Super "D" — a dark red single — a fertile tetraploid
2. Tetraploid — mixed colors
3. Tetraploid — yellow single
4. Macrophylla hybrids — white singles
5. Lactiflora — mixed colors
6. Lactiflora — from "Bute Clones"
7. Suffruticosa (T.P.'s) — the seeds come from a number of contributing peony friends!!

## NOTES ON OUR NATIVE PEONIES

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

(For *P. brownii* seed, see end of article)

In August, I made what has become my annual trip to south central Oregon to collect *Paeonia brownii* seeds. I was a little apprehensive of my chances of finding many seeds, since last year a drought had caused most plants to go dormant by early August, and most plants had not produced seed. This year would hopefully be different since there had been record snowfall and adequate Spring rains. Peony growers, however, say that the year previous is what makes the flowers and hence the seeds for the following year. Anyway, my hopes weren't too high.

As it turned out, there was no need for concern. All of the peonies were still green—not a sign of dormancy. Most plants had produced abundant seed crops. On one of the largest plants, I counted more than 500 seeds. One flower, on the same plant, had 9 follicles (pods) that contained more than 40 seeds.

Since the plants were not dormant and showed no signs of dormancy it can probably be assumed that *Paeonia brownii* does not need a dormant period in late Summer. Like Mediterranean peony species it appears that dormancy is an adaptation to dry Summers and not necessarily a requirement. This is good news for those who try to cultivate *Paeonia brownii* in wetter climates.

I tried to collect a few seeds from as many plants as possible, so that I did not take too many from any one plant. I also planted seeds throughout the colony. For some reason this colony has an abundance of very large plants, but few small plants. By planting seeds I hoped to increase the number of small plants. Besides, sticking my finger in the porous, volcanic soil to make a planting hole was great fun—kind of like planting sweet corn when I was a kid.

I sent most of the seeds I collected to nurserymen, botanical gardens, and individuals in the U.S. and many foreign countries. It seems that *Paeonia brownii* is a very rare plant outside of its range. I also kept seeds for my own attempts at growing *Paeonia brownii*.

Last year was my first attempt at growing this fickle plant. Nearly all of the seeds I planted in the Fall came up in late February, but most soon died after producing their first true leaf. The only survivors were those planted in raised beds that had been filled 2 feet deep with 1/3 sand, 1/3 peat, and 1/3 humus-rich top soil. All of the seedlings that died were in clay soils.

I also planted seeds of *Paeonia californica* in the same raised beds. These seeds came up about 2 months later than the *Paeonia brownii* seeds, but grew faster.

It turns out that *Paeonia brownii* needs cold temperatures to germinate (this can be done in the refrigerator) while *Paeonia californi-*



ca does not. Some of the *Paeonia californica* seeds that I planted in pots this Spring came up in September.

Drainage seems to be the key to successfully growing *Paeonia brownii* and *Paeonia californica*. This year I am going to experiment with planting mixes containing different parts gravel, grit, sand and top soil. With a lot of patience and a little luck I hope I can learn how to successfully cultivate our native peonies so these strangely beautiful plants can be grown in gardens.

If anyone would like to try and grow *Paeonia brownii* from seed, please send me two first-class stamps and I will send you a few seeds and hints on how to germinate and grow *Paeonia brownii*.

My address is P.O. Box 754, Ridgefield, WA 98642.

★ ★ ★ ★

## REGISTRATIONS

### LEONA WEINBERGER (R. W. Tischler) — 1993

Seedling A-90; parentage unknown.

Medium-colored pink bomb type. Blooms midseason. As the bloom gets older, the color changes to a light pink or white. Blooms are 5 to 6 inches in size, with many blooms per plant. Very easy opening blooms — plant 28 to 30 inches tall, with fairly strong stems. Excellent foliage. The right size flower for arrangements and basket display.

### ELAINE NELSON (R. W. Rischler) — 1993

Seedling #H-15; parentage unknown.

A 6 to 8 inch, pure white, flat-type bloom on plants 28 to 30 inches tall. A good number of quality blooms on fairly strong stems. Blooms open easily. Excellent green foliage. Blooms late with the flower lasting a long time.

### EASY LAVENDER (R. W. Tischler) — 1993

Parentage unknown.

Bright lavender-colored Japanese type of flower. 5 to 6 inch blooms on a 34 to 36-inch stem. Excellent dark green foliage. The plant stands heat well, and the many blooms open freely. Blooms midseason.

\*\*\*\*\*

**WANTED** — Peony Kaw Valley — my origination 1944, very dark red, double. **WRITE:** Myron D. Bigger, 201 North Rice Road, Topeka, Kansas 66616.

## WEED CONTROL USING ROUND UP

*Granville Hall, Rt. 6, Box 7365, Gloucester, Virginia 23061*

In the past, I have read several discussions in the *BULLETIN* concerning anxieties over the use of ROUND UP for weed control in peonies. I have been doing this for about ten years now, without any adverse effect that I am aware of. I have used it longer than that on daffodil rows, after the foliage has died and dried. There is, so far as I know, no reason to doubt the manufacturer's statement that ROUND UP has no activity in the soil.

In the early Spring, I use close roto-tilling to control the emerging weeds and grasses, switching (in June and July) to ROUND UP. I use a hand-held tank sprayer with angled nozzle to allow very close approach to the stems of the plants. It is extremely important that the spray mist be forward from the nozzle and in a tight column. If, by chance, peony foliage gets misted with ROUND UP, one must immediately remove the sprayed foliage and stems. Gloves should be worn for this purpose. Later, in early Winter (December), I spray the 'winter annuals' to keep the rows clean for Spring emergence of the peonies.

★ ★ ★ ★



*First-year peony plants, planted Oct. 1992, showing initial application of ROUND UP in early July 1993.*

## PEONIES WERE FASHION PLANTS

Seventy years ago, almost every village home had a peony plant growing in a circular spot, smack-dab in the middle of the front lawn. It was the fashion. It was the thing to do. Most of those white or pink peonies were wonderfully fragrant, but when the rains came, the heavy blossoms toppled and lay upon the grass.

Today, gardeners can choose peonies from among hundreds of varieties with dozens of different colors—even a dozen shades of red—and several types of peony rings to support the plants through Spring showers. This perennial, with the shiny-leafed foliage which provides background for later blooming plants, is now available in flower types classified as singles, semi-doubles, full doubles, Japanese, anemones and bomb types. Some of the names of the hybrids are almost as intriguing as the descriptions of their blossom forms and colors. Which ones appeal to you—**Mischief, Red Imp, Gerry, Marshmallow Tart, Gold Rush, or Lake of Silver?**

The ancients ranked peonies among the moon plants and fed them to raving, unbalanced people to cure their madness. Through European history, peony roots were used to treat epilepsy and spasms. Overdoses cured illnesses permanently. Peony plants were set in before cottage and manor doorways to help ward off witches and wild storms.

Back in the 8th century the Chinese cultivated peonies and they introduced them to the Japanese. Plant historians study old Oriental paintings of these plants and their blossoms. When traders and invaders brought peony roots to Britain, folks on those islands welcomed the fragrant blossoms of the pest-free plants that wintered well.

Settlers brought peonies to the east coast of America before 1640 and the next generations carried them west. Many splendid hybrid peonies available today are a result of combining different peony species at the Klehm Nursery, RR 5, Box 197, South Barrington, IL 60010-9390. The Klehm catalog price is \$4.

Here in Knox County there are peony plants known to be 75 years old and many probably older. The peony is a true perennial. It is important to set in the roots so the buds are no more than 1-1/2 inches deep. Divisions of old roots or new varieties of hybrid peonies which blossom with vibrant colors or with soft salmon or pink shades are perennials that will provide pleasure for years to come.

—*Camden Herald*, 6/10/93

★ ★ ★ ★

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

# OUTSIDE THE OLD HOUSE

Courtesy *Old House Journal*, March/April 1993

Gloucester, MA 01930

by Scott G. Kunst

Tough, easy to care for, and long-lived, peonies are among the best-loved historic plants.

Deep red European peonies have been grown as herbs since the days of ancient Greece. The most common of these, *Paeonia officinalis*, were brought to this continent by colonists. Blooming in May, this is the "old red piney" once so popular for Memorial Day. Two other species deserve passing mention: the Oriental tree peony (*P. suffruticosa*, actually a small shrub) and the fern-leaf peony (*P. tenuifolia*). Though wonderful plants, neither has ever been widely grown in America.

Most garden peonies here today descend from the Asian *P. lactiflora*. Cultivated in China for over a thousand years, garden forms of this species were brought to Europe around 1800. One variety—"Whitleyi Major"—can occasionally be found today. In the 1840s, tastemaker A. J. Downing included "Chinese White" and "Rose Paeonias" among a dozen choice perennials for a small garden. By the 1860s, French nurseries had created scores of new varieties, followed by the British. Late in the century, elegant single forms with petal-like stamens were introduced from Japan.

The early-20th century was a golden age for peonies. Hundreds of new varieties were created, many by American breeders. Whole books were published on the subject, and wealthy enthusiasts devoted entire gardens to them. For example, Clara Ford, wife of the automobile pioneer, planted 1200 peonies in a butterfly-shaped garden of nearly an acre. By 1942, the pages of *Standardized Plant Names* listed over 3000 varieties.

## Planting Peonies

Growing peonies today is as easy as ever. Peonies do best where Winters are long and frosty. In the South, consult a local nursery for advice.

The best planting time is early Fall. Choose a sunny to lightly shaded site with good drainage, away from tree and shrub roots. Leaving a good three feet between plants, dig a generous "\$5 hole." Enrich the soil with well-rotted compost, manure, or peat moss, and add a couple handfuls of bonemeal or bulb fertilizer.

Choose divisions with three to five pink "eyes" (buds) and several thick roots. These will re-establish themselves better than plants that are larger or smaller. Plant so that the eyes are no more than an inch or two below soil level—or, if you heed many old gardeners—so they show above the soil. Either way, refrain from deep planting,

which reduces blooming (as does excessive shade).

Peonies require little care after planting, which is why so many of them survive at abandoned homesites and old cemeteries. Mulch through the first Winter but not after that (peonies are hardy to minus 50 degrees Fahrenheit). "Peony rings" for supporting heavy flowers are sold at many garden centers, but inexpensive "tomato towers" cut in half work almost as well.

Ants are no problem—but no help either, despite the folklore. Sometimes a botrytis blight causes stems to brown and shrivel. To avoid it, cut all foliage to the ground every Fall and destroy. If it strikes, cut out all diseased parts and burn.

### Period Plumes

Many fine old peonies are available today, and these ten are a good start. Though many catalogs include dates of introduction, remember that most plants do not become common in gardens until decades later.

*P. officinalis*; **Rubra Plena** (by 1600)—Double red 'Rubra Plena' is the most familiar of this species, but there are pink, white, and single forms as well.

**Humei** (1810)—Occasionally offered commercially, this is a large, late, cherry-pink double from the dawn of *P. lactiflora* breeding in Europe.

**Festiva Maxima** (1851)—The Queen of Antique Peonies, 'Festiva Maxima' is still a standard of excellence and a top seller. It has enormous white flowers touched with crimson.

**Duchesse de Nemours** (1856)—There is a mysterious glow of deep yellow in the center of this early blooming double white.

**Mons. Jules Elie** (1888)—Despite lax stems, this free-flowering silvery-pink double is still very popular today.

**Mikado** (1893)—The first Japanese peony widely grown in the U.S. 'Mikado' fit well with late-Victorian Japanese aesthetics. A few dark red petals frame a large golden center of petaloid stamens.

**Philippe Revoire** (1911)—Some peonies are notably fragrant. The dark crimson petals of this still-popular double are heavy with the scent of roses.

**Minnie Shaylor** (1919)—A semi-double with an Arts & Crafts look to it, 'Minnie Shaylor' has a tuft of gold anthers surrounded by a delicate froth of pale pink to white.

**Elsa Sass** (1930)—One of the first peonies to win the American Peony Society's Gold Medal, 'Elsa Sass' is a wonderfully double creamy white.

**"Unknown Favorite" (?)**—Everyone seems to know one of these, a glorious beauty or family heirloom that has lost its name—as most old peonies have. No matter what the ancestry, enjoy, protect, and share it just the same.

## SOME OLD TIMERS

by *W. A. Alexander*

Peonies are unique among the more popular perennials. Not only do individual plants live to a great age, perhaps indefinitely, but varieties live for generations. How many varieties of iris which appeared in the catalogs 25 years ago are listed today? Daylilies come and go so fast no one can keep track of them. Are there any hybrid tea roses of 50 years ago listed in today's catalogs? In contrast, there are some varieties of peonies that are old, very old as flower varieties go, which are still popular and listed by practically every commercial grower. The poet, Alexander Pope, said, "Be not the first by whom the new is tried, Nor yet the last to cast the old aside." Some of the old timers should be laid aside, dropped from the catalogs and dug from our gardens. But there are others whose passing would be mourned by many peony people.

In the following paragraphs, I have listed some 20 varieties, all more than 50 years old, some over a hundred, which, in their day, were proud aristocrats and even now, can mingle with the newest and best without shame. Here are my first ten: **Festiva Maxima** (1851); **Baroness Schroeder** (1889); **Mons. Jules Elie** (1888); **Therese** (1904); **Walter Faxon** (1904); **Reine Hortense** (1857); **Sarah Bernhardt** (1906); **Lady Alexander Duff** (1902); **Karl Rosenfield** (1908); and **Kelway's Glorious** (1909).

These ten are worthy of a place in any peony garden. They are all reasonably good garden varieties, i.e. good growers and reliable bloomers. Their quality is such that all could appear on the show tables of a national show and not seem out of place. Several might even win high honors in specimen classes: **Kelway's Glorious** is still one of the top white doubles; **Mons Jules Elie** is perhaps the finest example of the bomb type; **Reine Hortense** is a flower of real quality; **Lady Alexander Duff** is one of the most beautiful semi-doubles, and **Karl Rosenfield** holds its own with most of the reds.

We can add a second ten which might contribute to our show winnings and add some spectacular kinds to our garden, but, unfortunately, would introduce an element of uncertainty and unreliability which would result in many disappointments: **LeCygne** (1907); **Phillip Rivoire** (1911); **Richard Carvel** (1913); **Martha Bulloch** (1907); **Mons. Martin Cahuzac** (1899); **Longfellow** (1907); **LeJour** (1915); **L 'Etincelante** (1905); **Tourangelle** (1910); and **Solange** (1907). **LeCygne** with its matchless form can (and often does) win best in the show any year it comes good, which, sad to relate, is rather infrequently in most localities. It is perhaps the most **unreliable** of all varieties which are widely grown. Much the same criticism goes for **Solange** and **Tourangelle**. If **Solange** and **LeCygne** happen to be good the same year, they can just about dominate a show. **Tourangelle**, in addition to being temperamental, has a weak stem. But in color, noth-

ing matches it.

**Phillip Rivoire** will also get you some blue and red ribbons, especially if you go to the trouble to grow them as large as possible. The form and color are good, they grow well, and they are fragrant. But they are likely to be too small to win in stiff competition. **Martha Bulloch** may get you some ribbons also, usually reds or white, and will bring some "ohs and ahs" from garden visitors because of their great size. But its quality is so-so and it is not a prolific bloomer or a reliable performer. **LeJour** remains one of the better white singles, and **L'Etincelante**, while not as attractive in color as some other pink singles, is nevertheless a valuable sort because of its reliability and heavy blooming habit. **Mons. Martin Cahuzac** is for those who want a black red. It is quite variable, often coming semi-double, but is show quality when fully double and large enough. The other two reds, **Richard Carvel** and **Longfellow**, are good garden varieties, reliable and free blooming. **Carvel** has the added advantage of being one of the earliest blooming lactifloras we have.

There are probably a number of Japanese type varieties of Japanese origin which are more than 50 years old, some likely more than 100; but their dates of origin or introduction are unknown. Such well known varieties as **Fuyajo**, **Rashoomon**, **Isani Gidui**, **Tamate-Boko** and **Toro-no-Maki** are all likely beyond the half century mark. **Mikado**, which still enjoys a degree of popularity is dated 1893, so might have been included in one list or the other. If one wants to make a planting of old timers, I am sure he would be perfectly safe to include any of the Japs of Japanese origin which are undated.

In addition to some excellent garden varieties, and some which would get us ribbons, perhaps trophies, in stiff competition, these lists of 20 old timers includes several varieties which are among the most important in the cut-flower trade. **Richard Carvel**, **Mons. Jules Elie**, and **Festiva Maxima** are widely used for early varieties; and if we expand the list by adding **Edulis Superba** (1924), a bright old rose pink, and **Judge Berry** (1907), a very light pink which fades to white, we have a good color range and flowers of at least fair quality. The two oldest, **Edulis** and **Festiva**, are unquestionably the most widely grown lactiflora varieties extant. It seems that anyone who ever paid any attention to peonies knows these two perhaps not by name but as "the big white with the red splash" and "the pink that smells so good."

For later blooming varieties, **Baroness Schroeder**, **Reine Hortense** and **Sarah Bernhardt** are widely planted for cutting, which leaves us without a red. We could add **Mary Brand** (1907), **Lora Dexheimer** (1913) or **Felix Crousse** (1991) to remedy that deficiency. The first two are good quality peonies but may be a little too early. **Felix** is later and has been one of the most popular cut-flower varieties, but does not have good stems and is not a high qual-

ity flower. We could go to **Karl Rosenfield** which is in our first list. It is a flower of excellent quality, but is said to open rather poorly from storage and not to last well when cut, thus lacking two essential qualities for cut-flower varieties.

So we find that there are many useful varieties among the old timers. If I were making a new planting of say 25 varieties and had to do it on a very limited budget, I would include several of the old timers I have mentioned. Even with no financial restriction, at least one, **Kelway's Glorious**, would be included. (The late George W. Peyton thought **K. G.** was the finest variety in existence.) If I were planting for cut-flowers, several would be on my list. The peony fan will always be interested in new things, and I am confident breeders will be providing them as fast as they can be assimilated. Some of the new ones will hold more than usual interest because they will be advanced generation hybrids, giving us new colors and new types. But in our preoccupation with the new things, let us not forget that there are some fine old timers which can hold their own in any company.

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## DOWN EAST GARDEN WAYS

*By A. Carman Clark*

*(The Camden Herald, June 10, 1993)*

Planting gardens has some parallels with writing Christmas cards. It's a once-a-year project. Notes and ideas for better organization and for improved methods of procedure frequently get mislaid. Just as addresses may be lost, those basic how-to-do-it practices may be difficult to recall. It's a full year since they've been in use.

General rules for gardening differ according to climate, soil and geographical location. The clay soil in most home gardens in Maine needs some lime, but out in Idaho, where the soils are alkaline, lime is the last thing any gardener would want to add. However, the general rule about feeding the soil—adding organic materials—is important in both East and West.

When to plant depends upon the particular seeds and the weather. Green beans sulk and rot in cold soils while peas and onions get growing when it's still jacket weather (for the gardener). The old rule about not planting cucumbers until the falling petals of apple blossoms drift across the garden is one to remember in midcoast Maine. Some old-timers proclaim that no melons or cucumbers should be put to ground until the 10th day of June.

Then there's that general rule about covering seeds with a measure of soil no more than three times the thickness of the seeds. Not an easy task when the seeds look like grains of pepper. However, this is a good guide to keep in mind. It may help you avoid burying



small seeds so they have no chance of germinating. A dusting of soil shaken over tiny seeds with a sifter or fine, dry soil gently whisked over them with a paint brush will do this light covering.

The old, sound rule of pressing the soil down so that soil and seeds have good contact, is important. With small seeds like carrots and lettuce, this can be done by placing the hoe or rake handle over the row and pressing down. The slight indentation this leaves helps keep that space moist. For larger seeds, try placing a board over the planted rows and stepping on it to insure soil and seed contact.

The general rules on spacing include giving each carrot a growing space the size of a juice glass, beets a space equal to the rim of a water glass, each chard plant a space equal to a breakfast plate, and each pepper plant a space a bit larger than a dinner plate.

### Soil Conditioning and Composting

Organic matter should be added regularly and lavishly to improve the condition of the topsoil and to ensure a proper supply of trace elements. Here it's well to remember an important general rule: more is not necessarily better. When a soil test indicates a need for boron, add only the amount recommended. If your garden needs magnesium, add Epsom salts in the limited amount suggested. Plants need only minute amounts of trace elements. Don't overdose.

What is the easiest general rule to remember and practice in making compost? Some gardeners find that thinking in terms of brown versus green helps them. Others think of dry or wet. Either way, the general ratio to aim for in mingling the two classifications of organic materials—carbon (the brown or dry materials such as old hay, leaves and sawdust) and nitrogen (green grass clippings, weeds and fresh manure) is to use at least five times as much carbon as nitrogen.

There are specific recipes for making compost. Books and magazine articles show how to build fine compost piles with layers laid on with exact measures of each item. When you're gardening, working out in your backyard spading and weeding, you'll have "stuff" to dispose of. If it's organic (usually weeds), it will decompose. A pitch-on compost pile will work. It will work better and provide a richer product if you make a point of adding more carbon materials and turning it now and then. Organic materials compost themselves in time. If you build a "proper" compost pile with all those recommended layers, won't those measured layers get mixed anyway when you turn the pile to let in air?

One more general rule worth heeding. Walk through your gardens every day. Watch for and enjoy the daily changes. Catch small problems before they become large ones. Hoe off, pull or scratch loose weeds as soon as they appear. Mulch after the seedlings are settled in and growing. Ten minutes each day is better than two hours on a weekend.



# TREE PEONIES

By Leo J. Armatys, Central City, Nebraska

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Leo Armatys was one of the pioneers in growing the tree peony in Nebraska. He wrote about tree peonies in every quarterly Bulletin until his death in 1975. Every article expressed the beauty of the tree peony and how to grow them. This article was written for Bulletin 169).

Threads of the eternal interlace the plant kingdom. Among the shrubs that make up an important segment of this kingdom is the majestic Moutan—*P. suffruticosa*, *lutea*, *delavayi*, and several generations of exciting tree peony hybrids. During its blooming season the tree peony stands alone, without serious competition from either garden or greenhouse. It has been said that heaven begins on earth. While awaiting the beautiful vision, live a little—grow tree peonies in *your* garden.

## SPRING STANDOUTS, 1963:

**Yasa-no-mine** is a pure white Japanese double. Lower tiers of petals are formed as saucer-shaped semi-doubles, with center petals folded somewhat like the red **Hino-tobira**, forming an upright crest and giving the illusion of full doubleness without excessive weight. Several days after opening, the center petals relax just enough to reveal pale chartreuse coloring of the seed pods.

**Shuchiuka**, palest pastel with cherry red flares, performed like an extended bloomer this Spring. Sixteen days between first and last blooms.

**Alice Harding**, choice lemon yellow *lutea*, set a new (local) record with ten good buds.

**Right Royal**, planted last Fall as a 2-year-old, seems the perfect flower to adorn coiffures of dusky-haired maidens from Hong Kong, Spain, Brazil, or other hot blooded countries. While first-year blossoms are seldom representative, I'd settle for no change in this small double *lutea*. It is mainly red, but with soft lights and dark shadows, and a fragrance to match.

## GROWING HINTS:

Getting a tree peony off to a good start is half the battle. Gardeners in the Orient sum up basic requirements in two words, "soft soil." A hole at least 3 feet wide and 2 feet deep, filled with generous mixtures of peat moss or leaf mold in the soil, will fill the bill. No reduction in hole size even if you are planting a tiny graft. Bonemeal mixed in the planting medium will provide all needed nutrients for at least a year or two.

## THE UNUSUAL:

Few bud-sports or mutations are found in tree peonies. When one does occur, it can only be preserved by grafting. One appeared in the fields of a commercial grower some years ago but has not yet reached the market-place. A false alarm in my garden was a stem of

**Souvenir de Maxime Cornu** with all red blossoms, none of the yellow, but an expert diagnosed it as a not uncommon trait of this *lutea*.  
**SPACING TREE PEONIES:**

Planting distances recommended vary from 2 feet to "at least 4 or 5 feet." Minimum spacing of 6 feet would be more realistic. Tree peony roots are far-ranging and fairly heavy feeders. In a double-tier bank, my 4-foot spacing looked about right with small plants a few years ago, but is now overcrowded. How would you go about deciding which plants to move—**Kamada-Fuji** or **Shu-Chiuka**? **Hana-Kisoi** or **Suisho-Haku**? **Canary** or **Black Pirate** . . . ?

Tree peonies resent moving, so choose their home carefully. We have two lavender Japanese tree peonies, same age. I moved one about 2 years ago. It had 3 blossoms this Spring, the other had 40!

## **IN THE EARLY DAYS OF MY PEONY CAREER**

*William H. Krekler*

When I first started peony breeding, and that was many years ago, I bought starts of most all peonies that I heard were outstanding. After testing them, I culled out over half. In Sept. I let folks come in and dig the peonies I had marked that I could not use. There were folks with no peonies and they appreciated the second-raters.

In keeping only the best for breeding, the precious bees could not make a bad cross. Watch a big bumblebee as they leave a blossom—they kick a wee cloud of pollen onto the sticky pistol. When the locus flowered, the bees left my peony acres and I had to do my own pollinating, with my special bowl and brush.

In my busiest years, I managed to collect around a bushel of the peony seed, every year. That was a lot of work—let the seed get ripe and then collect the pods before they shattered to the ground.

Planting was much easier. We made a level bed, three feet wide, where it was not wet and in full sun, where the soil was rich and crumbly. I scattered my precious peony seed about one-inch apart. The bed was then covered with old sawdust, (new dust gets too hot) about one-inch deep. The first year nearly all of them grew but some preferred waiting one more year. The first Summer they grow only about two inches tall, but the next Summer they grow about one-half foot tall. They are then transplanted out into the field about six inches apart. The third year they bloomed well enough, so we could judge which were worthy of transplanting for future judging. With a big plot of these select ones, one must learn to tell quickly which ones to tag for future judging and eventual registering. Peony flowers only last a few days and any good plants that you miss makes any free diggers happy.

The hybrids require more years to produce, they come earlier, and are more colorful.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Mr. Krekler is 93 years old, and lives in Tucson, Arizona.

# SOIL SENSE

*The Avant Gardener*, October 1993

Two new facts have suddenly come together. The soil is not simply a support for plants into which we can pour fast-acting fertilizers to nourish the plant. Secondly, a great part of the wastes now choking landfills can be home or community composted and used to make biologically active soils.

Compost builds desirable soil structure, supplies nutrients, suppresses diseases, and stimulates vast numbers of beneficial organisms from bacteria and fungi to earthworms. Composting technology has advanced to the point where any vegetable, paper, woods, marine and human or animal wastes can be quickly converted into this valuable material.

Gardeners compost garden, kitchen, and collected wastes in heaps, bins, bags, even in beds or mounds on which they can plant. Organic mulching is another valuable form of composting (often called sheet composting). Indoor methods include vermicomposting in boxes of worms.

Compost can supply most [and often all] of the nutrients needed by plants. Where one or more minerals is below optimum levels, rock powders can provide them. Fish and seaweed products are rich in trace elements, plus growth-promoting substances. Gypsum and wood ashes can supply calcium and phosphorus—Epsom salts provide magnesium. Gardeners who use compost, incidentally, have learned not to overdo nitrogen fertilization: soil tests do not show the large amounts of nitrogen that will be released from organic matter in the soil during the growing season, and adding more may simply be wasteful and contribute to groundwater pollution.

In recent years, numerous "miracle" growth boosters have been marketed. Most contain concentrated products of decomposition such as humic acids, often combined with mineral nutrients, microorganisms, hormones, even vitamins. We suspect these biostimulants are most effective where the soil is lacking in one or more of the substances they contain, or in the organisms which produce these substances. Where the soil is vitalized by frequent additions of organic matter, their effect may be minimal.

Some growth promoters which are sprayed on plants appear remarkably potent. Methanol (already on the market), and triacontanol and DCPTA (now under study) appear to accelerate photosynthesis when used in minute amounts.

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

# PEONY BREEDING IS REWARDING, AND NOT DIFFICULT

By Sam Wissing

## "SELFING"

*If you will just forget about fear, and if you will do the things I am going to suggest, you might just create some worthwhile additions to the Peony Garden. The Peony has a simple Botany, and will cooperate if you will just be willing to do a few simple things. They can bring great rewards to you every year, if you will just get up the courage to start. Some of my best work has been accomplished through the simple process of "inbreeding," or "selfing" which means crossing a plant with itself.*

The possibilities awaiting anyone who "inbreeds" seem endless. You might inbreed any lactiflora peony, such as "**Minnie Shaylor**," a thousand times and still not encompass all the possibilities of this formula.

So, next June, I suggest you start on any lactiflora peony that is single or semidouble, for those have all the necessary reproductive organisms.

**Miss America, Reine Hortense, Sea Shell, Krinkled White,** and many others will set seed if inbred. Be meticulous. This is important work, so why not do it the accepted, correct way! Bag all those buds selected as parents, with a one-pound or a half-pound paper bag, just as the buds begin to show color. This will protect them against rains, or against unwanted pollens borne by winds or by bees, any of which can spoil your plans. Secure the bag with a twist-'em so that the wind cannot blow it off. Then if you will feel the bag each day, they will soon feel like a marshmallow, which indicates that the bloom has begun to open. Now you may remove the bag and prepare the bloom.

First, using your fingers, scissors or tweezers, remove and throw away all the petals. The anthers on their little thread-like stems are also to be removed but keep these in a little box or container, for they contain the pollen which you are about to use. The anthers are probably now "in dehiscence;" that is, they have split open and are now covered with their own golden-yellow pollen dust. The stigma tips probably now have a sticky substance on them which will "hold" the pollen. The process of pollination is to transfer some of the pollen onto the tips of the stigmas.

Whether you place pollen from one bloom onto the stigmas of the same bloom or another bloom, will not matter. So long as both are on the **same plant**, you are "selfing."

Selfing is the easiest and simplest way to begin to pollinate flowers. If you have only one lactiflora peony plant in your garden, and provided it is not one of the heaviest "bomb" doubles (in which case

all the reproductive organisms have been transformed into petals) you can start on your career of pollinating. Do not imagine that because it is easy to do, its results are negligible. Far from it. The ancestry of the lactiflora peony is so immensely old and so immensely complicated, even if no other species are involved in it, that there are literally thousands of possible variations in its progeny.

Back to your work: you have now made the cross, which is half your labor. The other half is keeping your record. Replace your bag, secure it, and be sure to identify it with a label attached, on which the number of this cross is marked. Then in your notebook, under the same cross-number, write the name of the plant, date, temperature and anything else notable: time of day, etc. Incidentally, the temperature should not be above 90 degrees F. It has been thought that very humid weather is not good for crossing, so notes on the humidity might prove very revealing in the course of several seasons' crossing.

Another remark on records: you will be glad in that all the essential facts are there. Others may ask you about your crosses and you will be proud to be able to refer back and say "I did so and so," or on such and such a date, or using such and such a method. The time spent in keeping the records bears as great fruit as the cross itself.

Now all you need do is await the moment when the seed will be released. I believe seed may well be planted if it has attained a light brownish color but before it has been shed from the pod. The longer warmth it can have during this first Autumn, the likelier it is to germinate the next Spring.

## PEONIES IN THE SOUTH

*by Mrs. K. M. Colby, Monroe, Louisiana—Oct. 1966*

Now that our hot summer days are over and there is a hint of Fall in the air, every gardener feels the urge to be outdoors planting. I hope that whatever you grow you have the desire to grow it well. All of us who love to garden, usually have some particular plant to which we are partial. We will spend more time and effort in growing our favorite plant than we do others. I am grateful for the opportunity to tell you about my favorite plant, the Peony.

The Peony has a fantastic history dating from Greek mythology. Legend has it that it was named for Paeon, a physician who attended the Greek Gods. Paeon was the pupil of Aesculapius, God of Medicine. Paeon used the Peony root as a medicine and was credited with curing Pluto of a wound inflicted by Hercules during the Trojan War. He also cured Mars by using his powerful medicine. His success aroused the jealousy of his teacher who secretly plotted his death. Pluto heard of the plot to kill Paeon, and being ever grateful to Paeon for saving his life, changed Paeon into the plant which had been used for his cure. The plant ever since has borne Paeon's name. So goes the legend, and facts have no business getting in the way of legend.

The Peony has been recorded since 77 A.D. in modern times. Long ago it was believed that a Peony planted by the doorstep would keep away evil spirits. It was the forerunner of Hadacol, being listed as a cure for at least twenty diseases, including swooning, palsies, decayed spirits, fits, coldness of the liver, and all stomach ailments. The roots were used in soups and the seeds were used as a seasoning for food and drinks. I have found some recipes in old books in case anyone is interested in brewing up a pot of Peony soup.

Personally, we leave the doctoring to the doctors and the recipes to Betty Crocker and grow Peonies for the joy of growing the lovely Spring foliage and the beautiful blooms. We fell in love with Peonies eleven years ago while working in Illinois. We were told that peonies just would not grow down South. We visited Mr. Edward Auten, a famous hybrider, who gave us no encouragement, and reluctantly sold us six plants. After eleven years, we have most of the original plants and our peony garden has grown to about a hundred varieties, including a number of tree peonies. We have many visitors during bloom time, and it is amusing to hear them say, "They are just beautiful! Isn't it a shame they won't grow down here?"

There is no magic about growing Peonies in the South, but culture is somewhat different than in colder climates. They come in colors of white, pink, and red. There are two yellow varieties which are very expensive as yet. Most everyone is familiar with the big double white, 'Festiva Maxima.' We have found a few of these in this area which are thirty years old. Besides the large doubles, there are single, semi-double, and Japanese varieties. All do well here. In a good catalogue, varieties are listed also according to bloom time, early, mid-season, and late. We have found that early and mid-season are most satisfactory as they bloom before our weather gets too hot. Bloom time in our area usually begins about April 15th and lasts a month.

Talking of varieties brings up the question of where to obtain good roots. It takes labor and good soil to plant a peony, or anything else. A peony properly planted will live for twenty-five years, so it is a good investment to buy the best roots possible. As of now, the only place to buy freshly-dug named varieties is from a commercial peony grower. You can order their catalogues in the Spring—order your plants and they will be shipped in the Fall at the proper planting time. Peony roots planted in the Spring in the South are almost guaranteed to die. I hope that soon some of our local nurseries will have named varieties for Fall planting. Many people have been disappointed because their unnamed variety was a late bloomer, which would seldom bloom in this area. Most of us have to consider cost, so in case you hesitate to ask, there are wonderful peonies at a minimum cost

Select your planting site and try to have it prepared before your

roots arrive. Peonies will grow in full sun or in areas that get at least one-half day of sunshine. High passing shade that will allow one-half day of sunshine is ideal.

Avoid planting too near trees, shrubs, or hedge plants. Peonies resent intrusion by the roots of other plants that may rob them of food and moisture. They should be spaced at least two feet apart, but three is better. The first couple of years they may look lost in space, but a mature plant will have a spread of two to three feet across.

We now come to the place that separates the gardeners from the coffee drinkers—digging the holes! Dig the hole three feet in diameter and two feet deep. While you are laboring, it will help if you remember that the plant will be growing in it for years and years and you only dig it once. Save the top soil, but discard the sub soil and hard pan, if encountered. I've heard people say they have no hard pan. Either they are very fortunate or else haven't dug deep enough. After a well earned rest, fill the hole to within eight inches of the top with good friable garden soil mixed with a pound of bonemeal. The next step is one of the most important in your planting. Tamp this soil firmly in the hole. We find that tramping with our feet gives the best results. After tramping, you will find that more soil is needed to fill the hole. Repeat this process until you are positive that the soil is firmly packed and will not settle after our Winter rains. This is not the spot to skimp on soil. It is better to plant one peony well, rather than a dozen poorly. Now, almost all your labor is over. Make a mound of good soil in the center of the hole. Have the mound high enough that when the root is set on it, the crown or eyes are one or two inches above ground level. This seems high, but no matter how well you have packed the soil, there will be some settlement. When you are satisfied the eyes are set right, cover the roots well with soil. Grasp the top of the plant and shake gently to get soil all around the roots and fill any voids. Water well and after water has drained away, fill in the hole, covering the eyes with about three-fourths inch of soil. Do not cover with any mulch, as peonies like cold temperatures and any mulch around the crown may cause rot. Do label your plant by variety name or make a chart of your planting. It is much more fun. You are hoping the plant will be around for many years, and you don't want to say 'It' or 'Them' for that long.

The after care of Peonies is very simple. A mulch of pine straw, bark, etc., around the roots in the Summer, will keep down weeds and conserve moisture. In case of severe drought, a good soaking every week or so will help. The mulch should be removed in the Fall and the dead stalks cut to the ground. Remove the stalks and clean all debris from crowns. After the second year, a cup of bonemeal lightly dug around the roots after bloom time is enough feeding.

*(From the Editor—Mrs. K. M. [Glenn] Colby/Monday, died March 1992).*

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## THE GARDEN AT CHESHAM DEPOT

*Yankee Home Companion*, July, 1993

In my flower garden, I have always sided with peonies. Wherever we have lived, I have planted them, and when it's time to go, I dig them up and take them along, setting them out in the new garden with the same kind of pride reserved for the living room furniture—the couch should go *there*, of course, it's the only place for it. And so it is with the peonies, the center around which all the other flowers are arranged.

Over time, I have ordered several from White Flower Farm, a perennial nursery in Connecticut that does a lot of business by mail order. The peonies come in a sturdy cardboard box. The box is filled with wood shavings, and inside the shavings are the once-and-future queens of my realm: Cut back to nothing, residing in a cone of mossy earth, they look like—nothing. But I have been so conditioned that these little barren-looking cones provoke a rapturous, optimistic response in me that only things like jonquils in January can bring.

Not everyone agrees with me about peonies. I have friends who don't have a single one in their gardens. But to me they are the most exquisite bloom on earth, a perfect profusion of petals that even a rose cannot match. In fact, I'd put a peony, one single bloom, head to head with a rose any day. That goes for fragrance, too. I once tried to create a perfume from my peonies' blossoms. I came across the recipe in a book devoted to such offbeat gardening pursuits. I may have followed the instructions incorrectly, but what I ended up with was a saucepan filled with brown, soured petals, giving off the vague odor of rotting lettuce. It seemed fitting. I wondered, really, if it was possible to put such perfection into a bottle.

Who knows where these devotions come from? We have our preferences. I was given a clue to this particular one last year, when my parents moved out of the house where I had grown up. Behind the house, on either side of a slate path, were two lines of peony bushes. They had come from my grandmother's garden. Shortly after she died and her house was sold, my father went down and dug up her peonies and brought them home, planting them in these straight rows. I was very young at the time, and this act of transplanting, of bringing a part of my grandmother's garden into ours, seemed novel and quite pleasing. Even though more than 30 years passed, we never forgot they were hers. "Granny's peonies," we called them.

My sister and I helped my parents move. It was a long and tedious day, and at the end the truck was full and we were all very tired. It was time to say our goodbyes. At the last minute, inexplicably, I thought of Granny's peonies. I took a spade and one of the empty moving boxes from the truck and went out back. I took only one, leaving the rest for the new owners. When I got home, even though it was very late, the peony was the first thing out of the truck. I heeled it in next to the others in my small and forever-fragile flower garden. There wasn't any problem knowing where to put it.

—Edie Clark, submitted by Myron D. Bigger

# LEARNING FROM DON HOLLINGSWORTH

*Charlie Kroell, Troy, Michigan*

Anyone who reads the APS Quarterly *BULLETIN*, or, for that matter, any of the literature distributed by the American Peony Society, is familiar with the name Don Hollingsworth. It is ubiquitous, and one comes to associate it with consummate knowledge of the peony. Finally, at the APS Convention/Show in Mansfield, OH this past June, I had the rewarding experience of meeting, interacting with, and learning from this most accommodating gentleman.

On Saturday afternoon, he presented an illustrated general lecture on peonies and their culture, then responded to questions from an attentive and interested audience. Afterwards, I sought and was readily granted a personal interview to discuss additional peony matters and concerns. More recently I telephoned him on three separate occasions to continue and extend the questioning which I had begun in Mansfield. What follows is an amalgam of information distilled both from his lecture, and, to a greater extent, my personal "learning sessions" with him. There was some overlap, and material from both sources has been selectively abridged and interwoven in the following summary.

The lecture began with a rapid fire display of fine slides illustrating the great variation inherent to the genus. There is little question that each image could have been retained longer on the screen and discussed at length; but, clearly, there were time constraints to be met. Literature dealing with soil preparation, planting and culture was handed out, emphasizing that optimum conditions for peonies involve a deeply prepared site with soil amply amended with organic matter ("Nature's storehouse for nitrogen and trace minerals") and well aerated to enhance the availability of the  $N_2$  needed for respiration.

The importance of adequate drainage was stressed, with the use of tile recommended as a remedy for extreme conditions. Inadequate drainage was also proposed as a plausible explanation for the phenomenon of "root surfacing," which I have observed in a number of my established plants in recent years. In such cases, the top surfaces of large storage roots are displayed above ground, not unlike normally growing Iris rhizomes; and generally the new eyes can be seen already emergent when the foliage is cut back in Autumn. After eliminating soil erosion and frost heaving of deeply rooted mature plants as reasonable explanations, the possibility of lower root loss from rot due to a sump, or water vessel, effect was suggested. If a by-the-book, "perfectly prepared" peony hole (2 ft. diameter x 2 ft. deep, filled with good, organically rich soil) should be surrounded by and bottom out onto relatively impermeable hard pan, water percolating down through the friable, well drained planting medium could proceed at a healthy rate for only so far. Loss of deep roots in the water pocket zone could result in a plant less securely anchored and less

able to resist frost heaving. I have not yet lifted a plant to investigate this hypothesis.

Concerning fertilization of peonies, two applications per year were recommended for properly started, established plantings (i.e., some deep fertilization having been provided at planting time and after good vegetative growth is being made), say 2-3 year and older plants. One application shortly after flowering, say at petal drop, and another in Autumn, was seen as ideal . . . but to "just get it on" being the important thing. Kind of like the old pruning advice . . . to do so "when the iron is sharp." Don uses a granular farm crop fertilizer containing *ammoniated* superphosphate (to enhance phosphate mobility within the soil moisture) and having a balance of, say, 5-20-20, 8-16-16 or similar. Higher nitrogen levels are recommended for soils low in organic matter.

**Several additional nuggets of information:**

The suggestion that ants may be significant vectors of either (1) virus, or (2) botrytis, was dismissed on the basis that (1) ants do not penetrate peony tissues [merely feeding on the bud exudate], and (2) other sources of botrytis should far outweigh any problem which might derive from the activity of ants.

When blackened or greened anther tips appear on otherwise apparently perfect flowers, this may well be an adverse result of low temperature. As a plant proceeds through its rapid flush of growth in early Spring, its tolerance to low temperature diminishes. In some susceptible varieties late cold snaps can apparently affect normal cell development, resulting in short petals with uneven, scalloped edges . . . sometimes to the extent that anther tips are exposed directly to ambient temperature and light while still in the tight bud stage.

Flower size can be increased not only by removing the side buds (in those varieties which bear them), but by thinning the stems as well. Thus, for a mature plant, if stems are selectively removed shortly after emergence, leaving only a half dozen or so, a noticeable size increase should be expected. Reference was made to a classic article on producing exhibition flowers which appeared in the Royal Horticultural Society Journal around 1930-31. Stem thinning carried to the extreme, of course, could adversely affect storage root development for the following season.

Cutting back foliage which may still be luxuriantly green in early Fall should represent no great loss in important photosynthetic activity, as it appears that most of the food production to prepare storage roots for the following season is accomplished during the first half of summer.

Concerning the oft heard precaution to *never* plant a peony where another peony has previously been grown, the opinion was given that this would indeed be true if the prior plant is known to have been diseased or infested with nematodes. However, if no such adverse conditions were preexisting, there should be no great concern about planting peony in the same location.

Many other interesting peony matters were discussed, but I must here bring this article to a close. In doing so I would like to again thank Don Hollingsworth for freely sharing his abundant knowledge and especially for so cheerfully granting me no insignificant amount of telephone time during which is certainly a very busy period for him.

## PEONIES FOR THE CUT FLOWER TRADE

*Frank E. Moots, Newton, Kansas, Bulletin 169*

A comment in the *BULLETIN* some time ago concerning varieties of peonies for cut flowers deserves some discussion. It is true that only a few varieties, mostly of the so-called bomb type, dominate the cut flower market. But there is a very good reason for this.

Any peony which, before it is ready to cut for market, is open on top to the extent that moisture can get into it, is a poor risk in storage. Rain or even a little dew inside a bud can cause mold and rot, destroying the value of the flower. Bomb types like **Snow Mountain**, **Charley's White**, **Mons. Jules Elie**, **Edulis Superba** and **Felix Crousse**, or those with extra long guard petals such as **Sarah Bernhardt** and **Reine Hortense** usually do not open enough to take moisture before they are ready to cut.

Another reason that this form of peony makes a better cut flower to store and cut is its ability to open into a good flower from a tighter bud than the heavier, more fully double kinds. Anyone who has tried to store the fully double varieties has discovered that most of them must be at least half open and some fully open when cut. A bloom that is half or more open is sure to be crushed or mangled in shipping unless treated as an exhibition flower, and that kind of handling is much too expensive for commercial cut flowers.

If one is selling peonies direct from a garden or for immediate use these factors are not so important, but to any producer who stores and sells wholesale they are vital.

Most of the smaller cut flower growers, those who cut perhaps five to twenty thousand dozen a year, cannot afford to take chances on new varieties which have not been tested for keeping qualities. The largest cut flower producers, while always interested in improved varieties, still use the tried and reliable kinds for the bulk of their crop.

There is also the matter of cost. Planting an acre of peonies is a considerable investment. Land and planting costs count up; cultivation costs are high the first few years when hand weeding is necessary. New varieties seldom command a premium price in the cut flower market, so there is really not much incentive to plant the more expensive ones.

Experience can quickly temper the enthusiasm of a grower trying out new varieties. Some which seemed very good for local sales from the hobby garden did not prove satisfactory when field-grown and held in commercial cold storage for shipping. It is devastating to find

that a thousand plants which have been cared for carefully for four or five years, will not produce flowers that can be stored and shipped.

All these things have a bearing on the planting of peonies for cut flowers and I think that they explain at least part of the reason for the older, well tried, varieties still dominating the market.

A few varieties, such as **Myrtle Gentry** and **Felix Supreme**, are showing up in the larger plantings. But while we are looking for that new one which will be ideal, we must use what is available, and most growers are getting quite good results.

## PERENNIAL PRODUCER OF HYBRID PEONIES

*By Jane Pepper*

(Special to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*)

Founded in 1852, the Klehm Nursery in South Barrington, IL, has a long and distinguished history of producing a wide range of nursery stock. Here in the East, this family business is known for superior perennials, available to gardeners through its attractive catalogue.

Klehm's grandfather, Charles C. Klehm, began selecting and hybridizing peonies in the early 1900s. Today the offerings in the Klehm catalogue reflect his work and that of Roy and his father, and of such hybridizers as William Krekler and A. P. Saunders.

Hybridizing peonies is a long process and one that requires enormous patience and persistence. As Roy Klehm commented, "In this decade, we're finally able to offer products of work started by my father and grandfather." After the initial cross, the seedlings are evaluated and the best selected and put through additional evaluations.

Once the hybridizer has decided which of the many selections he or she wishes to offer to the public, selections that, Klehm says, "must be better than what's already on the market," the organization must gear up to produce sufficient numbers to handle the requests. "On average," says Klehm, "it takes almost a quarter of a century from the time the breeder makes the peony cross to the year the gardener can make the purchase."

For the peony fanatic, Klehm can offer 800 varieties. Looking toward the future, Klehm is excited about the development of rock garden and corsage peonies. **Tinkerbelle** (listed in the '93 Klehm catalogue) is an example of a rock garden peony, measuring only 16 inches high, but with foliage and flowers in good proportion to the height of the stems. The flowers are small, single, lavender-pink, opening in mid-May to the end of the month. As new developments appear from these Krekler-Roy Klehm hybrids, look for rose, red, and additional lavender-colored flowers.

Corsage peonies are the other end of the spectrum. Not yet available through Klehm's catalogue, the flowers of these peonies are

large and blowsy. They resemble cactus-flowered dahlias, with long, thin, twisted petals, says Klehm. Depending on variety, the flowers range from 2 to 6 inches in diameter. "Gardeners," says Klehm, "either love them or hate them, but I think flower-arrangers are going to have lots of fun with them." Klehm's is working on 70 selections of corsage peonies.

The Klehm family, also has been a leader in developing day lilies. Tetraploid day lilies, strong plants often with brighter-colored and more abundant flowers, benefit from double the amount of chromosomes as their diploid cousins. Both types are featured in the catalogue, along with a range of miniature day lilies, valuable to gardeners with limited space or for those who'd like to combine day lilies with smaller plants nearer the front of the border.

For shaded situations, the Klehms offer a wide variety of hostas, and Klehm encourages gardeners to consider planting pulmonarias with hostas. Adaptable to spots that are half sunny, pulmonarias are low-growing perennials, 10-12 inches tall, with early white to pink to lavender flowers in early Spring.

For a copy of Klehm's catalogue, mail \$4 (refundable with the first order) to the Klehm Nursery, Route 5, Box 197, Penny Road, South Barrington, IL 60010-9389.

## 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 water logged—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 full 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.

# WHY FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS

*Grace H. Lincoln, Port Washington, New York*

When we dig into history for the record of the way plant material has dominated decorative ideas in all parts of the world, we are impressed by the fact that the present emphasis upon flower arrangement is just the American way of doing what the Chinese, Greeks, Persians, Egyptians, Japanese and others have tried to do in past centuries.

Each group enhanced life and the contemporary scene with plant material which was at hand and used it in terms of personal privilege and appreciation. Art is always a record of the way people think.

It is perhaps, quite in order, that within our societies and clubs, there should be discussions pro and con, as to which offers the greatest spiritual uplift—a finely grown plant or a deliberately arranged design of the cut plant material. Differences in opinion are a sign of healthy activity and inevitable growth. Just about one-third of our population is earth-minded, but only a small percentage of these people have opportunity to enjoy the privilege of garden space. Thus an apartment dweller may become skillful at arranging flowers some other person had the time and ability to grow.

In the beginning the arranger may concentrate upon things other than horticultural quality in material, but after constantly handling the flowers one discovers that well fed and healthy plants vibrate with a color, luster and form which is lacking in weak, commonplace material. Thus, by a circuitous route, horticultural discrimination may be fostered.

Much the same is true of artistic effort. One learns the mechanics easily but constant application and practice are needed before the arrangement becomes a graceful presentation of the plant material woven into the idea for the design. Within the material itself, we have the reason for the arrangement. It may be an adventure in color or an effort to make the best use of a fine curve. Every composition speaks audibly of the comprehension of the designer.

Individually, we approach the problem with personal standards which grow out of knowledge and environment. To some, there is security in traditional style, while others are intrigued with the newest of modern ideas. There is an abundance of plant material for any style we choose to interpret.

Our show backgrounds demand a concentration upon every element which influences the arrangement, while our domestic arrangements are made with flowers which suit the scene we have ourselves provided. The vase of flowers which makes a gracious note at home may lack interest for the show, while many show pieces are self-contained designs which are not restful in the average home.

Sustained interest in flower shows and flower arrangement leads

one to the conclusion that these things are serving a very real purpose and should be encouraged until the hard work proves something for the American way with plants and flowers. A new generation will take over the problems of better horticulture, road improvement and conservation, encouraged by the record which has grown out of the faith of those who believe in the spiritual compensation of fine landscapes, beautiful gardens and flowers and freedom to work with them.

*Horticultural News*



## HISTORY IN THE NAMES GIVEN THE BRAND ORIGINATIONS IN THE EARLY YEARS OF THE BRAND NURSERY

*Written by Mr. A. M. Brand, Faribault, Minnesota*

**A. G. Perry** (1933) — A very fine gentleman who lived near Hopkins, Minnesota. Great lover of good peonies. Was with a large wholesale novelty house in Minneapolis.

**Blanche King** (1922) — A very efficient little Canadian French girl with us in our office for about 10 years. During these years, the seed was sown and the flower developed.

**Charles McKellip** (1907) — One of the head men with the *Faribault Republican*, one of our principal Newspapers here in the pioneer days. Much interested in early work trying out apple trees to find varieties that would be hardy in our climate.

**Chestine Gowdy** (1913) — At the time A. M. Brand was in high school, Miss Gowdy was head of the English Department, and Mr. Brand had English under her. A very efficient teacher. Taught in Normal School, Spearfish, South Dakota; high school in Minneapolis, Minnesota; and at Normal, Illinois. Author of English textbooks. She is now 92, and she and Miss Myrtle Gentry make their home together.

**C. W. Bunn** (1939) — Head of the legal department of the Northern Pacific Railway for many years. Intensely interested in peonies. Always put on wonderful displays of the finest peonies at our state show.

**Dr. Christopher Graham** (1936) — Of Rochester, Minnesota. One of the organizers of the world-famous Mayo Rochester Medical Clinic. Passed away in June 1952, in his nineties.

**Dr. F. R. Huxley** (1939) — Our family doctor, and has been for many years. A good doctor, and a good peony.

**Dr. John L. Crenshaw** (1936) — One of the good doctors with the Mayo Clinic at Rochester, Minnesota. Has a large and wonderful collection of peonies.

**Dr. Lee W. Pollock** (1936) deceased — Another of the many good doctors with the Mayo Clinic at Rochester, Minnesota. Had a great planting of peonies.



**Edward Flynn (1948)** — Named for a school boyfriend of Mr. Brands.

**Ella Christiansen (1925)** — Sister of Mrs. A. M. Brand. In our early days with the peony business, she helped us much, handling stock. Another of our best peonies.

**Ellen Foster (1947)** — Sister of George Foster, an old schoolmate of A. M. Brand. They sat together for a year at the same two-seated desk.

**Evangeline Newhall (1936)** — Fairbault is the location of Shattuck Military Academy, a school with a national reputation. Evangeline Newhall was the wife of Dr. Newhall, head-master for many years. Commencement generally came when peonies were in full bloom. Mrs. Newhall always saw that visitors at Shattuck also visited the peony farms.

**Hansina Brand (1925)** — Hansina Brand is Mrs. A. M. Brand. Mrs. Brand chose this variety from all our seedlings to bear her name. We consider this our greatest show flower.

**Henry Avery (1907)** — An old Iowa friend of my father's. A man much interested in all horticultural matters.

**Henry St. Clair (1941)** — The first year that A. M. Brand was in school, the children were seated two at a desk. My deskmate was Henry St. Clair, a full-blooded Sioux Indian boy. Henry always saw the funny side of life.

**Jean Cooperman (1938)** — Jean visited our peony fields at the time we were naming a good red peony. Since she seemed so much interested in her father's selection of peonies, we named this red one for her.

**Joanne Foreman (1939)** — Is Miss Gentry's sister. She has been in the office for many years and keeps the peony orders moving down to be filled. A very efficient woman, and so had a fine peony named for her.

**Josephine Hope Healy (1936)** — Daughter of one of Mr. Brand's early boyhood friends. Quite an artist. Now lives in Mexico City.

**Judge Berry (1907)** — John M. Berry took the land our Nursery now occupies from the U.S. government as a homestead. Oliver F. Brand, my father, purchased this land from Mr. Berry in the Fall of 1870. Mr. Berry was a lawyer, and soon after this transaction he was elected to the Minnesota Supreme Court as a Judge.

**Lora Dexheimer (1913)** — A great friend of Chestine Gowdy's and a teacher at the Illinois State Normal University. She visited us at the time we were naming some seedlings and we named this fine red for her.

**Martha Bulloch (1907)** — Named for the mother of Theodore Roosevelt.

**Mary Brand (1907)** — Was my mother. Father collected his

first peony seeds for planting, having in view the producing of a peony to name for Mother. I think after many years of trial, that Mary Brand is one of our very best red peonies.

**Mrs. Bryce Fontaine (1936)** — Wife of a prominent physician of Memphis, Tennessee. Mrs. Fontaine planted many peonies at Memphis and had fine success with them. The Fontaines visited our fields one year, at the time there was a National Doctors' Convention going on in Minneapolis, 45 miles from us. The doctor took in the Convention—Mrs. Fontaine stayed with us. She selected the seedling we named for her—a fine dark red.

**Mrs. Deane Funk (1928)** — A friend of our company who lived in McLean, Illinois. Visited our fields many times.

**Mrs. A. S. Gowen (1938)** — At the time of the selection of the peony for naming, Mrs. Gowen was a resident of St. Paul, Minnesota, and one of the most active peony enthusiasts. She has had much to do with the success of the Minnesota State Peony Society.

**Mrs. Charles Mayo (1939)** — Named for the wife of the doctor at the Mayo Clinic.

**Mrs. Frank Beach (1925)** — The aunt of Chestine Gowdy after whom the peony, Chestine Gowdy, was named.

**Mrs. Harried Gentry (1925)** — Was the mother of Myrtle Gentry.

**Mrs. John M. Kleitsch (1925)** — John M. Kleitsch of Duluth was, I believe, one of the charter members of the Minnesota Peony Society. He was tremendously active in promoting the peony.

**Myrtle Gentry (1925)** — What is generally considered our best peony. Miss Gentry has been a member of the firm of Brand Peony Farms for many years.

**Rev. H. N. Tragitt (1928)** — An Episcopal minister living at Detroit Lakes, Minnesota, at the time we first knew him. Made the trip of a couple hundred miles to our gardens every year to see the peonies.

**R. A. Napier (1939)** — A Chicago real estate man who lived at Blue Island, Illinois. Had what was probably as fine a private collection of peonies as was to be found in the world.

**Ruth Elizabeth (1938)** — Niece of A. M. Brand and for many years in our office. The peony, Ruth Elizabeth, is a medium-sized peony of fine deep red color and perfect form. One of the most beautifully-formed of all peonies.

**Sam Donaldson (1943)** — A schoolmate of A. M. Brand in boyhood's early days. Was in banking business in Montana and western Minnesota.

**Susan White (1933)** — This variety was named for one of our customers in Estherville, Iowa.

**Victory Chateau Thierry (1925)** — At the time we named this peony, there were two brothers fighting at the battle of Chateau

Thierry. They had worked for us and we named the peony after the battle in which they fought so hard.

**Walter Lindgren** (1936) — Of St. Paul, Minnesota, treasurer of American Peony Society. As good a judge of peonies as one can find.

**W. E. Blanchette** (1936) — Was an engineer on one of the main railroads running northwest from the Twin Cities. He was a very critical judge of fine peonies.

**Winnifred Domme** (1913) — A very quick little French girl who worked in our office way back in 1912-13 at the time our first field of seedling peonies was still at its best, and where the selection for naming was made.



## OLD-FASHIONED PEONY, A GARDEN STAR

*The Home News*, Pegi Ballister-Howells, East Windsor, New Jersey

Peonies are one of my favorite garden flowers. They are amazingly easy to grow. Each year they return with ironclad dependability. The blooms, which arrive in May and June, are daringly bold and infinitely delicate at the same time. September is the ideal time to plant, transplant or divide peonies so if yours need attention or if you always admire them in other gardens, now is the time to get on with the project.

### Ancient origin

The peony is not a new flower. The botanical name is "Paeonia." It has a Latin origin and means "belonging to Paeon." Paeon was the physician to the gods. During the Trojan War, Pluto had been wounded by Hercules, and Paeon used the plant to treat the wound. The physician had been given the plant by the mother of Apollo.

The plant is thought to be native to China and is called "Sho Yo" which means "most beautiful." It found its way to Japan in the 8th century, but didn't make it to Europe until the early 1800s.

The most common type of peony is the herbaceous perennial that dies down to the ground every year. There are several flower types. Singles have one or two rows of petals with bright yellow centers. Japanese have five or more outer petals with a large cluster of "stamenoides" in the center. Doubles have more petals than you can count and are usually fragrant. Some sources list semi-doubles which have a great number of petals but still have an open center. It appears that 'anemone' and 'bomic' peonies are similar, if not the same. An outer ring of flat petals surround a thick tuft of petals in the center.

Peonies that have remained in the same spot for 30 years or more are not uncommon. It's best not to transplant them too often since that disturbs the blooming cycle. Dividing the roots is the best way to increase your stock, but can delay bloom for several years. Never divide plants that are three years old or less and try to locate them

where they can stay in one same spot for 10 to 15 years.

The second type of peony is the tree peony. It has been known since the 6th century. During the Tang Dynasty (7th-10th centuries), tree peonies were the special plant of the emperor.

Tree peonies are small woody shrubs with few branches. They produce large numbers of flowers in yellow, pink, white, rose, crimson, scarlet, black and purple. The blooms arrive earlier than the herbaceous types.

### **Royal roots**

In China, tree peonies are referred to as the "King of Flowers" and their beauty is worthy of such a title but be prepared to pay a King's price. Fifty dollars is an average price.

Many catalog companies carry a selection of peonies, but Klehm Nursery in South Barrington, Illinois is famous for breeding and developing peonies. The number of varieties is impressive and the quality is excellent. Many plants will bloom the first year.

★ ★ ★ ★

*(The following article was submitted by R.W. Tischler,  
Faribault, Minnesota. It is from Clare Sheppard.)*

Growing in the garden at Charlestown, Mass., of Oliver Holden, composer of the tune "Coronation," is to be found an old-fashioned red peony. The peony, to a casual observer, would not seem any more attractive and perhaps not so handsome as many of the magnificent specimens which adorn the lawns of hundreds of summer homes. Its claim to fame lies in the fact that it has a marvelous history and is said to be 130 years old, says the *Patriotic Review*.

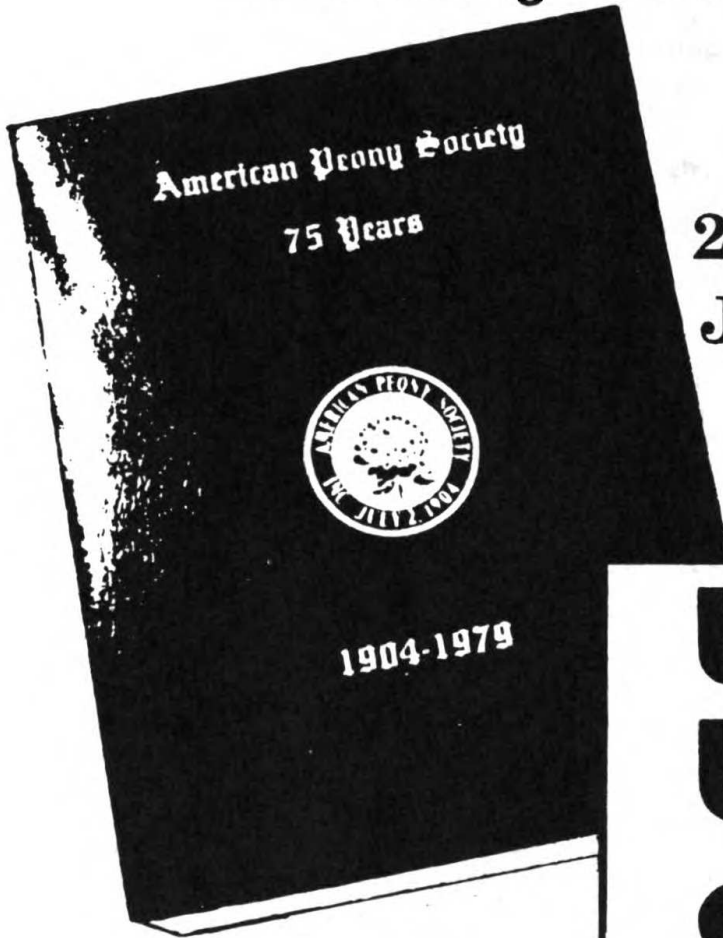
The present occupant of the old Holden home, which is located on Pearl street, on the side of Bunker Hill, is Mrs. Thomas Doane, and it is through her kindness that the story of the peony appears in our pages, which runs as follows:

Mrs. Holden as a child watched with others the sprouting of the peonies in the spring of 1776. After the battle of Bunker Hill, the British fired the town of Charleston and all traces of the ownership of lands was destroyed. Houses and fences were swept away, and there was seemingly nothing left to mark anew the boundary lines of the owners. Some one suggested that in the springtime their garden plants might sprout and give some clue; and sure enough, the old peony put forth its leaves, and from its location, near the old city hall, was marked off the property of the different late owners and also was laid out the new city of Charlestown.

From *St. Albans Messenger*, April 6, 1901  
(St. Albans, Vermont)



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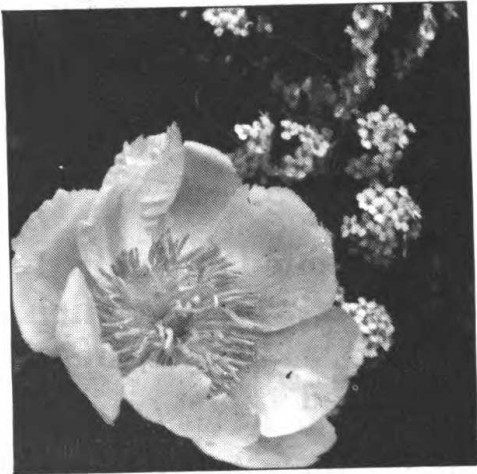
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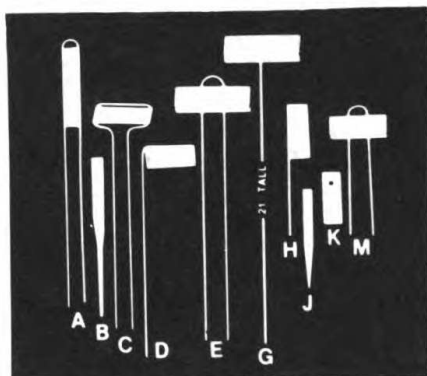
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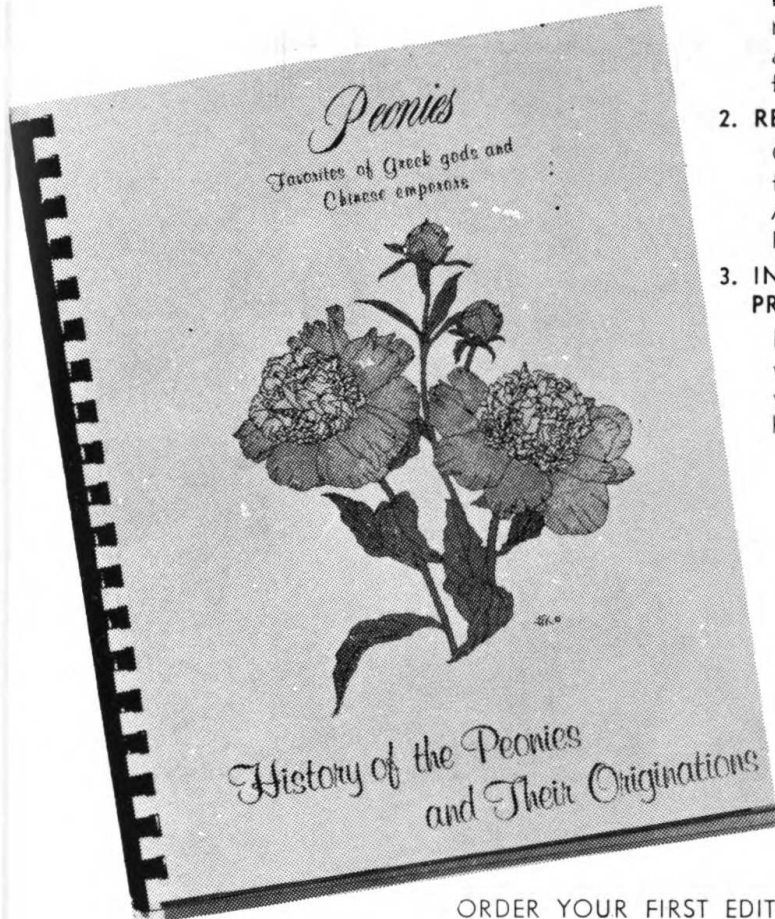
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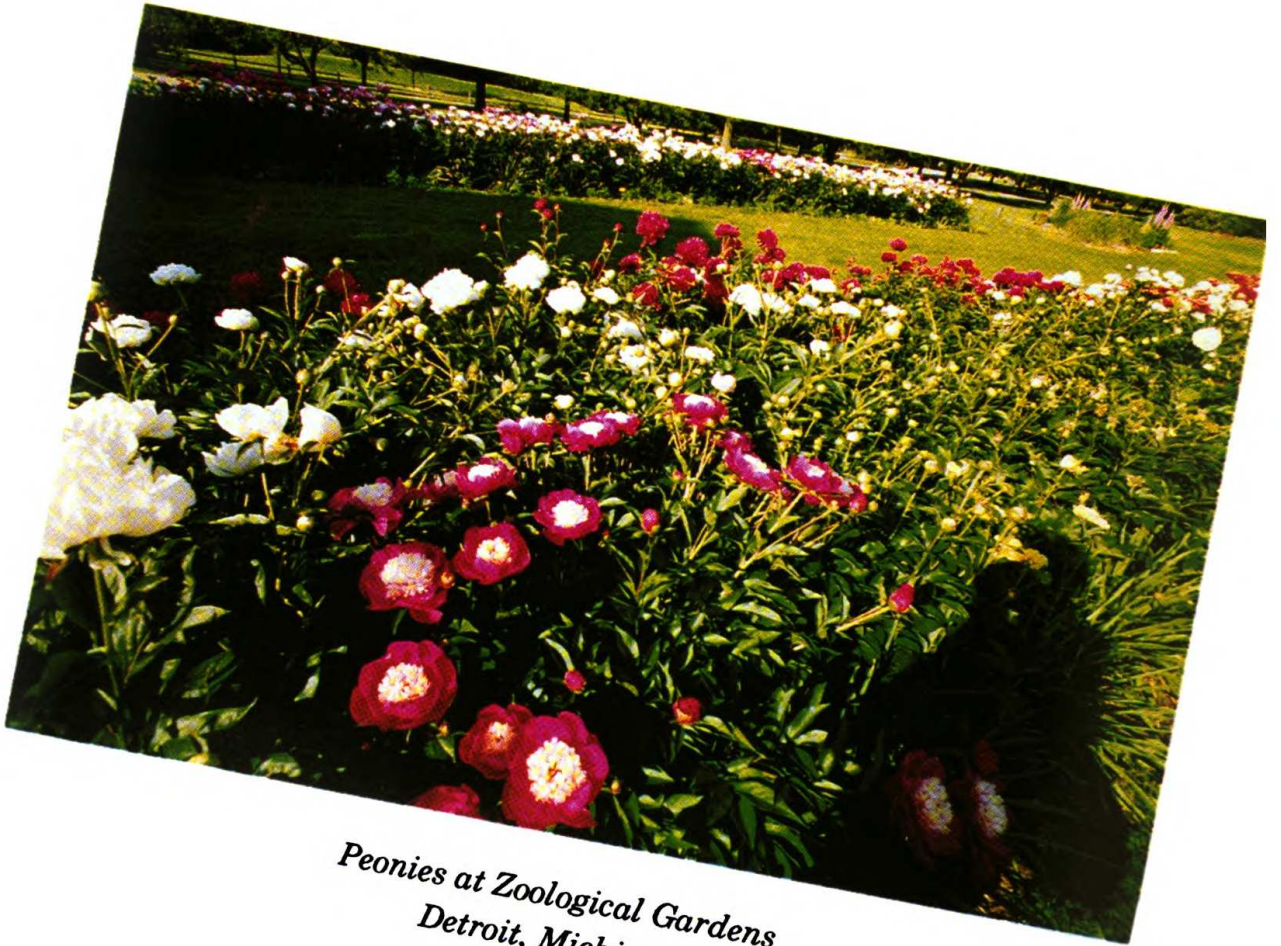


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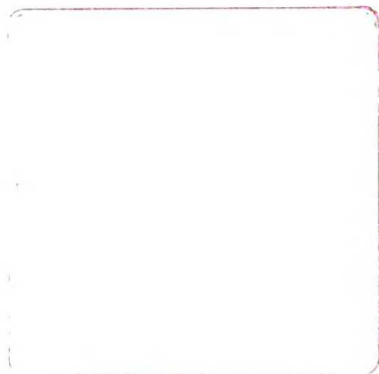
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