

*Leifer Sen*



# The American Peony Society Bulletin



*BOUQUET PERFECT (Tischler 1987)*

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## Announcing

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# AMERICAN TREE PEONIES



### Appended cultural notes cover:

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

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

# The AMERICAN TREE PEONY

## 63 BRILLIANT FULL COLOR PHOTOS

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

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

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**AMERICAN PEONY SOCIETY**  
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# AMERICAN PEONY SOCIETY

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## DEPT. OF REGISTRATION

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

Greta M. Kessenich, Secretary

## OBJECTIVES

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

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

## MEMBERSHIP

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

Single Annual.....	\$ 7.50	Junior or member family.....	\$ 2.50
Single Triennial.....	20.00	Life.....	150.00
Family Annual.....	10.00	Commercial membership.....	25.00
Family Triennial.....	27.50		

Family membership, any two related members in same household..... One Bulletin  
Junior membership, any age through completion of high school..... Separate Bulletin

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

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



# AMERICAN Peony Society Bulletin



June 1990 — No. 274

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### (Bulletin Cover)

#### *BOUQUET PERFECT (Tischler 1987)*

*This beautiful peony is bright pink, a solid color, anemone type with flowers 4-5 inches in size, 24 inches in height with good straight stems. An excellent flower for the perfect bouquet and for table arrangements.*

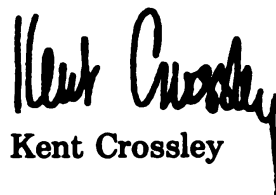
*Tischler Peony Garden, Faribault, Minnesota*

# FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

About the time that this Bulletin is published, the Society's wonderful new book on the herbaceous hybrid peony will become available. The book has occupied much of our secretary's time for the past year. She has devoted an *incredible* amount of energy to its preparation! It is an absolutely unique contribution to the peony literature and I would urge you to be sure to buy a copy.

As you plan additions to your peony collection for this Fall, you should also remember the hybrids. Each time I speak to a group of gardeners (as I did earlier this week), I remind them that far too few hybrid peonies are grown in American gardens. Species of *Paeonia* also should be more widely grown. Now is a good time to locate seed for Fall planting.



Kent Crossley

# **PROBLEM: What To Do With Excess Peony Blooms**

*By Robert F. Schmidt, Brecksville, Ohio*

As my collection of peonies, which started in 1970 with 96 plants, grew, first to about 200 plants, and then with the addition of a new bed to 400 and now 560 plants, I found I had a problem. I quickly began to run out of friends to give the blossoms to and not wanting to hoard so much beauty, I was being frustrated in sharing it with others.

After widening the giving process to include our church, our doctor's office, business offices of friends [not all of whom were thrilled to receive an unexpected armload of peony blossoms], I would still have peonies going to waste, and, finally, it seemed to me that perhaps I should try selling the blossoms to florists. This would have the benefit of using almost all of the blooms, of recovering some of the costs associated with raising such a large number of peonies, but best of all, of gaining a wider audience for the flower and thus a greater appreciation of and demand for the Peony. Since joining the American Peony Society I have been driven by this desire to increase the knowledge and love of the Peony.

Once this solution came to me, suddenly I had another problem. I became aware very quickly that most people, and, surprisingly, many florists simply are unfamiliar with the qualities and beauty of the modern peony and this ignorance resulted in an undeserved lack of interest and actual fear of using the peony commercially. I thought I would be able to drop in at any florist with a free sample and walk out with an order. Alas, it was not quite that easy. I encountered outright hostility—a refusal even to accept a few blossoms free; a refusal to consider buying because of false notions about fragility and lack of keeping power—petal fall even before delivery to the customer; and a refusal to take a chance on any flower not in everyday use and supplied by a regular wholesale source. Even with a money back guarantee.

Also, I was hampered somewhat in my early contacts by my own lack of experience in how the blossoms would hold up in commercial use. I could only refer to my own experience with flowers cut and brought in for home use, and promises to deliver freshly cut flowers just at the opening stage, and to refund for any blossoms that failed, which never happened. As I had anticipated, peonies are superb cut flowers—all varieties based on my experience—and I gained confidence quickly as time passed and I began to receive enthusiastic reorders.

I kept trying to find a willing florist, and Cleveland is a large market which helped, and there are many florists. My first breakthrough came, not from blind-calling on florists, but from my complaining at lunch with a friend who knew personally one of the well-known florists on the eastside of Cleveland, and took me to meet him. He turned out to be somewhat familiar with the Peony and agreed

to buy 200 blossoms per week at \$6.00 per dozen, delivered, if they were what I said they were. This was a start, although hardly a profitable one considering the underlying cost of the roots, preparation of the beds, plus the 2-3 hours spent in cutting, to say nothing of the time and gas for a 50-mile round-trip for delivery. And I was never able to supply 200 satisfactory blossoms in any one week.

Next, I learned that one of the members of the Mens Garden Club of Greater Cleveland owned a florist shop, as did the son of a member of my wife's church, and both happened to love peonies, and they agreed to buy whatever I brought them. By now, in my second and third year, I was up in price to \$7.00 per dozen, still not profitable, but beginning to spread the word.

On one of my delivery trips to the east side, I had a few very average blooms left over, and took a chance on dropping in on one of the leading society and party florists in the midwest, who had been written up in the local newspaper with an account of some of the parties in New York and Washington he had provided the flowers for, and I left the left-overs with his assistant. Before I had returned home, he had called and told my wife that he had no idea there was such a source for peonies in the area. He'd love to use them. The end result was a visit to check out my claims as to number of plants, and the next year I sold my entire crop to him. A big thrill for me was to learn that he had taken a large number of my dark red varieties to Washington, D.C. for a party given by a large Philadelphia bank where the color scheme was maroon and gray, and the amazed comments of the guests asking what were the beautiful flowers in the arrangements.

The last few years I have expanded to supply our local florist and three others on the west side of Cleveland, and one in Hudson, Ohio, so that now I hardly have time or peonies enough to satisfy the demand I have created, and last year I screwed up my courage and raised my price to \$9.00 per dozen (still delivered). Along the way, I have also supplied five weddings, starting with our youngest daughter, where peonies were the only flowers used, and in all cases arousing much comment from the guests, and, also, on several occasions, large numbers of peonies for the altar.

Another interesting contact was to sell blossoms to the leading Ikebana teacher in Cleveland for use in her classes, and donating blooms for her use in a demonstration lecture given at the Garden Center of Cleveland. Through this exposure, I was asked to donate blossoms for use at an Ohio Garden Society Judging Symposium, which I was glad to do, and where I was able to loan our American Peony Society publications and several growers' catalogs.

All of these activities, while time consuming, especially at APS Convention time, and hardly profitable, have been very gratifying. They have provided me with great pleasure in exposing an ever larger number of people in the Cleveland area to the Peony, and in some cases to start growing peonies for the first time.

My conclusions and advice for anyone interested in attempting to sell excess peony blooms is to be patient and persistent in contacting florists, to have some good photographs to use in pre-season calling, and then to be sure that the initial deliveries are as outstanding as possible, freshly cut into tepid water, and delivered the same day—and not to be afraid to charge \$9-10 per dozen. The modern peony is a vibrant, long-lasting, brilliant, mysterious and elegant flower which should be more widely known and more widely used in commerce. I hope other members of the American Peony Society will have their interest aroused and make the attempt to spread this message.

## CUTTING AND STORING PEONIES

June, 1975—No. 214

*Myron D. Bigger, Topeka, Kansas*

Growing peonies for cut flowers compares to growing fruit trees. It takes time and care.

Your peony plants do best when planted three and one half to four feet apart, in each direction. This makes cultivation easier and gives free air circulation among the plants. It is better for the plants if they are not used for cut flowers until they are at least four years old.

If your plants are strong and healthy, you should be able to remove about one-fourth of the stems the next year or two. Never remove over half the foliage from any plant, if you want good flowers the following year.

Some home markets will take very short stems. Then you can remove more flowers and still have one-half of the foliage on each plant.

In order to have nice flowers, they should be disbudded. In the Spring, watch your plants closely and remove all side buds from each stem leaving only one, on top. Take this terminal bud in one hand and stretch the stem taut. With the other hand give the side buds a quick break out, sideways. This takes a little practice. The younger the buds, the easier it is to do. It is also much easier after a rain, as the sticky syrup is washed from the buds.

Watch your buds closely. When they are about as soft as marshmallows, they are ready to cut. For the wholesale florist, they have to be cut much tighter than this stage. This will come with experience. As soon as possible after they are cut, get them in cold storage. Store them as near 34 degrees Fahrenheit as possible to do.

We wrap our peonies in 24" white butcher paper and leave top and bottom of the packages open for ventilation. The packaged peonies are then set in bushel baskets or boxes, and store them dry. You may find some other way of storing, such as ventilated boxes, where you can lay them down and air can circulate around them. The buds must dry off before storing, or they will have a tendency to spoil.



I have had a running argument from year to year with some growers. They say to store in water, and I say dry! And you know we both come out all right.

I found that if they are stored in water the buds will not dry off enough to keep them from water spotting, should they be kept in storage very long.

When the flowers are taken out of storage for sale or use, the ends of the stems should be cut off and then placed in water at least 24 hours. Storing them dry, as we do, takes a little longer for them to fully open than being stored in water.

Almost any variety of lactiflora peonies will keep two weeks and open to a beautiful flower. Some varieties keep longer than others. Some of the very heavy petaled full rose type peonies will not take cold storage from the bud stage.

Bomb type, like **SNOW MOUNTAIN**, **CHARLIE'S WHITE**, **MONS. JULES ELIE**, **FELIX CROUSSE** and many others will take longer storage and perform well when removed.

The less pollen a peony has in the bloom, the better it will perform. **MRS. FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT** is one peony that is not a bomb that does well. It also does not have any pollen to my knowledge. It also does not have so many tightly packed petals, as many of the other big flowers.

With experience you will find what the trade wants. The wholesale florist will want longer stems and buds that will take longer storage.

Don't be afraid to handle your peonies. Few flowers can take the rough handling that peonies can endure.



**NIPPON PARADE** (Auten 1935); medium height, a bright and cheerful bright deep red Japanese variety. A lighter center.

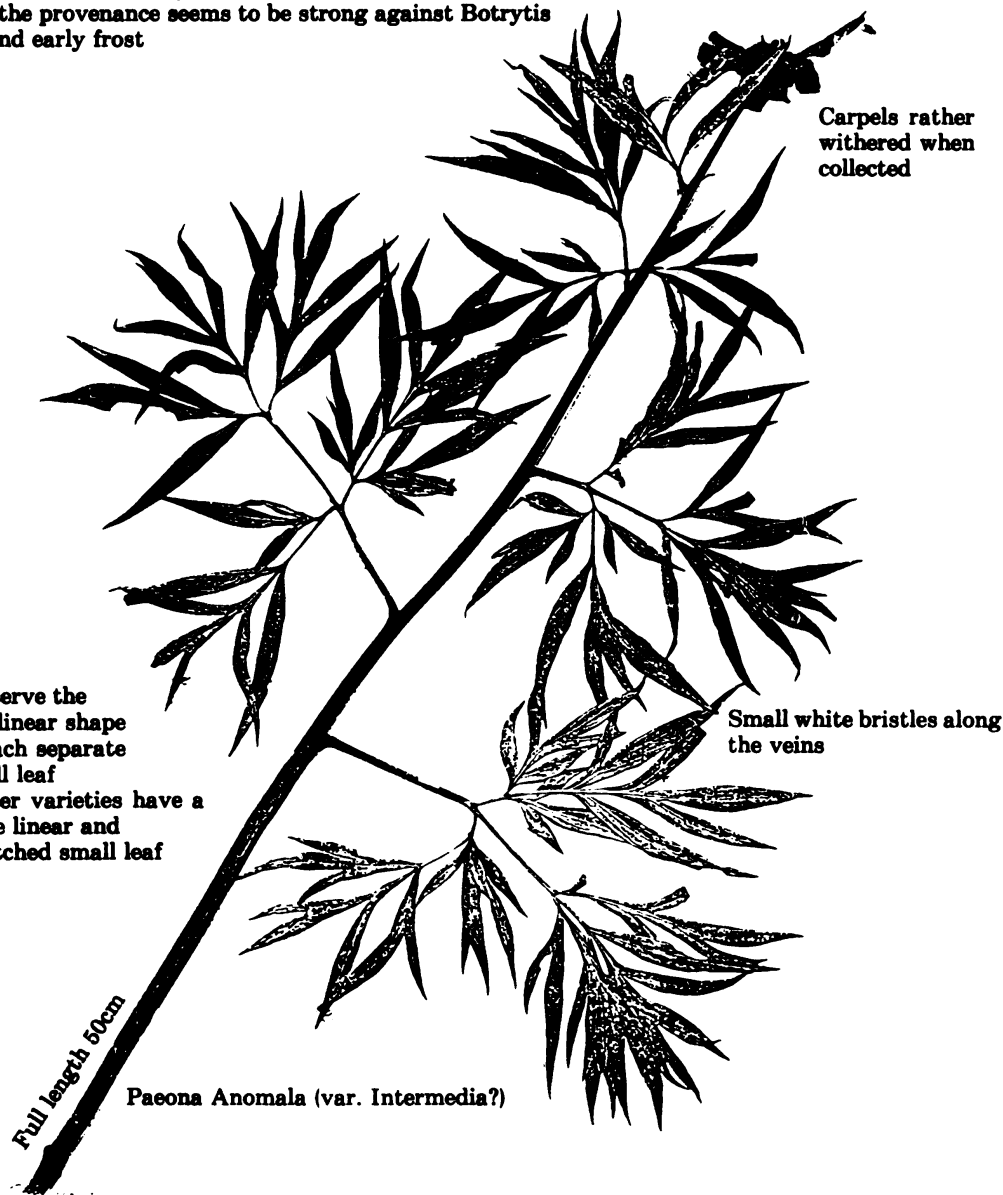
# FROM NORWAY

By Christen Weydahl Vic

Mr. Vic and his mother have an unusual garden, in that every plant is small and low growing. This is a sketch of a species found on a border that had been closed for years. This area has returned to the wild, with grasses of years' growth, exposed to the elements of the seasons. It was growing in a remote area under circumstances not suitable for any plant.

Mr. Vic has studied the species, made this sketch, and according to Stern, thinks he has correctly identified it. Editor

- one-flowered stems, single flowers
- open, upright, good, clear red color
- early flowering time
- flower lasts 8 days
- the provenance seems to be strong against Botrytis and early frost



Soil . . . Roots—may be of a slightly spreading nature

## THE GOLD MEDAL PEONIES

**MRS. A. M. BRAND** (Brand, 1925), St. Paul, 1923  
**A. B. FRANKLIN** (Franklin, 1928), Chicago, 1933  
**MRS. J. V. EDLUND** (Edlund, 1929), Chicago, 1933  
**HARRY F. LITTLE** (Nicholls, 1933), St. Paul, 1934  
**NICK SHAYLOR** (Allison, 1931), Syracuse, 1941  
**ELSA SASS** (Sass, H. P., 1930), Minneapolis, 1943  
**HANSINA BRAND** (Brand, 1925), Rockford, 1946  
**GOLDEN GLOW** (Glasscock, 1935), Rockford, 1946  
**MRS. FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT** (Franklin, 1933), Guelph, 1948  
**DORIS COOPER** (Cooper, 1946), Milwaukee, 1949

These ten varieties were the ones listed by Mr. Peyton up to the time of his search of records. Since then the following have been added to the list:

**RED CHARM** (Glasscock, 1944), Dixon, Illinois, 1956  
**MISS AMERICA** (J. R. Mann-Van Steen, 1936), Dixon, IL, 1956  
**KANSAS** (Bigger, 1940), Grand Forks, North Dakota, 1957  
**MOONSTONE** (Murawska, 1943), Minneapolis, 1959  
**MISS AMERICA** (J. R. Mann-Van Steen, 1936), Minneapolis, 1971  
**NICK SHAYLOR** (Allison, 1931), Kingwood Center, Mansfield, OH, 1972  
**AGE OF GOLD T.P.** (Saunders), Milwaukee, Wisconsin 1973  
**WALTER MAINS** (Mains, 1957), Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, 1974  
**BU-TE** (Wassenberg, 1954), Kingwood Center, Mansfield, Ohio 1975

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

No Gold Medal awarded from 1975 until 1980.

**CYTHEREA** (Saunders, 1953), Ithaca, New York, 1980  
**BOWL OF CREAM** (Klehms, 1963), Kingwood Center, 1981  
**WESTERNER** (Bigger, 1942), Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, 1982  
**CHINESE DRAGON** (Saunders), Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1983  
**DOLORODELL** (Lins, 1942), Kingwood Center, 1984  
**BURMA RUBY** (Glasscock, 1951), Mahomet, IL, 1985  
**CORAL CHARM** (Wissing, 1964), Minneapolis, 1986  
**NORMA VOLZ** (A. L. Volz, 1968), Kingwood Center, 1987  
**PAULA FAY** (Fay, 1962), Chicago Botanical Gardens, 1988  
**HIGH NOON** (Saunders, 1952 TP.), Janesville, Wisconsin, 1989

\* \* \* \*

Peonies need a great deal of water from the time they come up until the blooms open, and again when they are making their eyes for next year's growth. Nature usually supplies enough for their wants. If the season is dry and the plants begin to wilt, from lack of moisture, it is wise to give them a thorough soaking. Enough water should be given to wet the ground down to the bottom of the roots. Repeat when the soil becomes dry.

# PEONY PROBLEMS

*I have had peonies for many years, but they do not respond, in growth or bloom.*

*I think my main problems are Black Walnut tree roots, which I fight each year by digging long and deep ditches to cut the roots, and nematode infection. I've read everything about the latter problem, and it seems that the only usable control is to plant where there was sod and/or keep a lot of compost working around the plants.*

*I believe the nematode problem is general, as I have received plants from well-known suppliers that show some damage to the roots upon receipt. I think I have always had them in the soil, so I am not blaming the shippers. Must be rather extensive in the midwest, but it would be interesting to know what the really big producers do to help control.*

(The following article is reprinted from the June 1980 APS Bulletin)

## MANAGING NEMATODES WITHOUT BENEFIT OF PESTICIDES

*By Don Hollingsworth*

The lack of a nematicide which is authorized and available for use by home gardeners is certainly irritating, if one happens to be looking for such a product. Peony fanciers primarily want to produce flowers, and not to be digging peonies to clean up roots. Thus, for those who have discovered that there really are nematodes which parasitize peony roots, it is keenly disappointing not to have a promising curative at the local garden center.

It hasn't always been this way. For a decade or so, new nematicide products, suitable for treating established plants, were being widely tested and some introduced for general use. However, the most effective pesticides are often the most toxic, the most dangerous. Recognizing this, it takes no great power of reasoning to note that with the recent rise in consumer product safety standards, the availability of the new nematicides has declined, so far as the general public is concerned. Paradoxically, commercial uses of nematicides are perhaps growing, especially in agriculture and in turf grass maintenance. The catch for home grounds users is that availability is limited to legally authorized uses, called label approval. The more dangerous materials are limited not only by place of sale regulations, but they can only be purchased by trained and certified pesticide operators.

Compounding the situation is that pesticides for nematodes have never been in great demand by home grounds users. In spite of all the publicity nematodes have had, most people do not recognize even the telltale galls of root knot nematodes. Accordingly, manufacturers faced with the rising costs of establishing label approval for specific uses have had an economic decision to make—whether to continue offering certain products. I have been told that the active ingredient of **Nemagon**, a once offered nematicide, now appears in a garden center product labeled for control of tree borers. Perhaps it is not the danger level, but lack of having made a successful labeling application to ap-

proving authority, that makes this nematicide not available. Thus, an indirect effect of the new regulations is seen.

While root knot nematodes may be widespread in occurrence, both in the range of plants parasitized and in their geographic extension, they are only occasionally an obvious problem to peony growers. (See "Parasitic Root-Knot Nematode in Garden Peonies," this Bulletin, June 1974.) While it is an appealing prospect to have a curative pesticide available, other means may be taken which are to the grower's advantage and with perhaps greater long-range benefits.

The model logic of how to grow root-knot-free plants is to place disease-free divisions in disease-free soil. The crux of the matter is how to re-establish disease-free soil once nematodes have been found. There are two approaches. One is to sterilize the soil, by any convenient method. The other is to grow non-susceptible crops for a season or so. These techniques are used in combination and with good potential of success in commercial propagation nurseries. On the other hand, when nematicides are used to treat established perennial crops, the best that can be hoped for is a suppression of the population, giving an economic control through reduction of the problem. Ideally, sterilization of small areas and clean-ground rotation of crops on larger growing areas can lead to nematode-free plantings. These methods can be adapted for use in home grounds situations.

For sterilization of affected sites, a product called Vapam is available through garden centers. It destroys everything that it contacts, thus the roots of nearby plants will be pruned, up to some short distance from the nearest point of application. An alternative to sterilization is excavation of the old soil and replacement with soil from a clean source, such as a grassy field. Nematodes are likely to be present in the soils of old garden sites, unless clean-up cropping has been carried out.

Clean-up cropping can also be used to advantage for improving soil fertility before setting new plants. Use cereal rye for a winter crop and sudan grass for a summer crop. Control all broadleaf weeds. Fertilize well and return all growth to the soil to improve the organic matter level. The addition of organic matter in large quantities has been found to correlate with reduced populations of nematodes in controlled experiments. Thus, by its use one may at once make things better for peony growth and worse for the nematodes. I have been told by one veteran peony grower that in most cases he couldn't see much difference in growth of peony roots which had nematode galls and those which didn't. If this observation is accurately understood, he didn't really have a nematode problem, whether or not they were actually present. Rather, the soil situation must have been good for the peonies and worse for the nematodes.

Little that is new can be constructively offered about the importance of good soil for growing peonies. It has been well covered in the peony literature. Any perennial which has to make great growth in

order to perform best is benefitted by assuring that the soil is at the peak of fertility and of good depth. Peonies are not the sort that are good candidates for success "tucked-in" to some gap in the border on the spur of the moment. The rewards are more reliable when conscious preparations are made in advance. The same kind of conscious planning will pay off when correcting problems where peonies have not done well in the past.

Of equal importance in cleaning up a nematode problem is that they not be re-introduced by bringing infected plants (or infected soil) to the site. Clean divisions can often be propagated from plants infected by nematodes. They can also be propagated by grafting buds onto disease-free nurse roots. The first thing to consider is how to be sure that the diseased roots are affected with root knot nematodes rather than Lemoine disease, which also results in knots or lumps. For positive confirmation, contact your county agricultural extension office for instructions on how to send a sample of root for examination at your state university plant pathology lab.

For your own diagnostic efforts, a fairly reliable visual key to the difference between the two diseases is found inside the root galls. Slice through a medium-sized or larger lump in successive, thin slices. The Lemoine lumps will have an embedded area of yellowish tissue, in contrast to the surrounding normal whitish tissue. Nematode galls will be whitish all the way through, often with a bit of dead, blackened tissue. Do not overlook the possibility that an individual plant may be affected by both diseases.

If you have a Lemoine disease-infected plant, normally the indications are to destroy it. The cause is unknown, so believed to be a virus. Consequently, it can probably be spread to other plants by insects, root grafts, and cutting tools. Disinfect tools in alcohol between plants.

If root knot nematode is found and it is desired to cut clean divisions for replanting, you need a keen eye, water and scrub brush, and a place to work where the infected waste can be kept from getting to other susceptible plants. Cut back all roots to unaffected tissues. Destroy all new white roots, for they may be too young to see the distorted growth which indicates infection. On larger roots, look for two distinctly different gall formations, regular galls and side galls.

Regular galls are obvious, for they arise by blocking the entire growing point of a young root, so that it stops extending. A branch root may or may not arise from just behind the infection site. These galls will assume a more or less round shape as they grow over several seasons, due to secondary parasitization.

Side galls do not interrupt the entire cross section of the root, so that the root continues to grow normally except for the immediate area of distortion. As the root grows in diameter over several seasons, the gall may grow also but may become obscured by the surrounding nor-

mal root tissue. In a cross section slice, the gall will be seen as a wedge of irregular tissue that is widest at the outer surface of the root. Some of these side knots will be easily overlooked unless the root is examined very carefully. Any unusual surface feature of the root should be "cored out" with the point of a knife to see what is under it. It is best to rid the premises of any suspicious tissue at this time. A small amount of clean propagating material is better than a larger amount of risky material.

The need for the scrub brush and water is obvious. Roots must be clean in order to be examined closely. Scrubbing should be applied to all peony plants coming onto the premises, as well as to the divisions from any suspected home-produced plants. The shipper knows his own planting stock and may be quite justified in sending roots with a certain amount of soil clinging to them. One very good reason is the high labor cost involved compared to the low price which general nurseries are accepting for peony plants at this time. However, the extra effort involved for the buyer to double-check against the entry of diseased roots is negligible, compared to the potential benefits.

Peony growing pays off well for the extra effort entailed in maintaining vigorous, healthy plants. It has always been so, since centuries before the advent of garden pesticides. While it would be nice to have a curative for root knot nematodes, it is not a necessity. Being able to win without the benefit of chemical pesticides, however, probably sets a peony grower apart from some other classes of plant cultivators by the implied certification that a higher level of skill has been attained.

## FROM HOLLAND

We have a successful flower season behind us. This has been an open winter without snow and frost but it is now April and we had our first frost for a week—4° celsius. The peony leaves have damage and some buds, too, especially the selected plants of one year old.

Botrytis finds its way; now we are using Azimag + Sumizdex. The peonies under glass are harvested now. My impression is with high night temperature of 20°C, and by day 18°C, they grow faster. I must harvest them three times a day with use of an monorail. When I cut the stems, I always leave five leaves. Small flowers are not harvested.

I have a new method against Botrytis. I wash the buds clean from soil with rain water from our basin (two water basins with three million gallons), which we also use for orchids. I washed 8000 peony plants in our greenhouse, so the cold is near the buds and disease is under control in the beginning. Up to the present time, they look healthy.

Now I am experimenting with peonies in rock wool and agrofoam in seven gallon containers. The results are better than normal soil.

—*Kees Karsten, Zwaagdyk, Holland*

\* \* \* \*

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## THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORTS

### Nominees for the Board of Directors

Board of Directors having served their three-year term, expiring this year, 1990, is namely: Irvin Ewing, John E. Simkins, W. G. Sindt, Frank Howell and Chris Laning. A letter was sent to each director asking for confirmation or rejection to serve another three years. Irvin Ewing asked that he be replaced because of other commitments; all others responded in the affirmative.

George Allen was elected last year to fill an unexpired term. This year he is a nominee for re-election for a full three-year term.

For the full three-year term vacancy 1990, the nominating committee presents the name of John Elsley. Mr. Elsley is presently Director of Horticulture for Wayside Gardens, and has held that position for the last nine years. Previously he was chief botanist at the Shaw Botanical Gardens in St. Louis, was botanist for the Royal Horticultural Society Gardens at Wisley, and is an expert in Plant Taxonomy. He lectures worldwide and the peony is one of his favorite subjects.

Steve Varner has been selected as nominee to fill the unexpired term of Edward Michau. Mr. Varner lives in Monticello, Illinois, where he operates his nursery of selected perennials. He has spent years in plant breeding. He is well known for his Siberian Iris and has introduced his own hermerocallis.

Over the years he has been working with peonies and has seedlings of both herbaceous and tree peonies that are very promising. He has introduced one deep double dark red, **Avis Varner**. He assists in peony activities at the conventions. Also, he has an exceptional interest in old peony gardens.

Scott Reath of the Reath Nursery, Vulcan, Michigan, is our nominee to fill the vacancy of Dr. Dewey. Scott is well known as a nurseryman as his knowledge of peonies is well founded. The Reath Nursery is a family business and Scott is actively engaged with all phases of the business. He is superb in the grafting of tree peonies. He is an excellent exhibitor of peonies, especially the different varieties of tree peonies at the National Conventions. He is a qualified Judge of peonies.

Scott is a graduate from Michigan State in 1980 with a degree in horticulture.

Keep all fertilizer away from the crowns of the plants. There are no feeding roots there. Spread it over the area where the roots grow, from six to eighteen inches from the crown, and thoroughly incorporate it with the soil. Use it with discretion.

\* \* \* \*



# MY SCIENCE PROJECT WITH PEONIES

*Cheryl Moore McCloskey, 815 Niewahner Drive, Villa Hills, KY*

I've always been the black sheep of my family when it comes to gardening. My sisters all inherited green thumbs from our mother, father, and grandmother. Allergies may be why I have shunned gardening for so long.

Last year the peony caught my eye; it was love at first sight. I was so enamored that I walked the neighborhood, searching the yards for different varieties. I was astonished to discover that people did not know the names of their peonies, and I wanted more varieties.

I joined the American Peony Society and began to study peony catalogs. Then I started digging in preparation for a planting, lost eight pounds from digging in the hard impacted clay soil of our area. I also toted bags of humus and pushed a loaded wheelbarrow.

Now, from the catalog, I selected: **RED GRACE, FAIRY'S PETTICOAT, KANSAS, PRINCESS MARGARET, FELIX CROUSSE, PETTICOAT FLOUNCE, NORMA VOLZ, PHILIPPE REVOIRE, HERMOINE, RENATO, NICK SHAYLOR, PAUL M. WILD, MRS. F.D.R., PILLOW TALK, TENIFOLIA RUBRA PLENA**, and an unknown peony awaiting their appearance this Spring. I am now hoping to add two tree peonies, **LEDA** and **IPHIGENIA**.

I teach seventh and eighth graders, mostly boys with learning and behavior problems. They sometimes brag about damage they do to their neighbor's gardens. I took a peony catalog to class. We decided to plant **Festiva Maxima** in the school yard. We dug the hole and prepared the soil in advance, while waiting for the order to arrive.

Of course, being boys, they loved getting their hands dirty. After digging, one of my toughest students said: "I hope you appreciate this. I don't even do this for my mother."

Klehms Nursery sent me a gratis, **PRESIDENT TAFT**, which the students planted three feet from **FESTIVA MAXIMA**. The local newspaper published an article about my class and their peonies.

Now that Spring is here, they eagerly are watching the plants, like new parents, and are very protective. I explained that peonies are long-lived and that someday they will be able to bring their children to see this science project. I am hoping that my classes will add a peony every year in the school yard.

Knowing that we will have to wait a year for bloom, I made a peony poster so my students and I will see what the flowers will look like in time. At a future date, perhaps my students will be able to afford a plant to take home for their own yard.

I would like to get a **RUSSELL EMRICK**. My mother's maiden name was Emrick. Does anyone know where to find this plant?

The older I get, the more I value and appreciate the beauty of this

planet God has given to us. I am really happy that my small piece of earth will be made more beautiful by the peony plant.

## REGISTRATION

**SNOW PRINCESS** (Roy Klehm)—Feb. 9, 1990.

Seeding #121R. Parentage, 933H x Bowl of Cream.

First bloomed 1969.

Dainty semi-double white with smooth multiple rows of guard petals. Good green foliage, 39 inches in height, with good stem strength. Reliable and fragrant. No seeds, good substance. Pollen and stamens.

## PEONIES IN CHINA

Prof. YU HENG, Shang Dong Agriculture University has published three books about the peony: "*Tree Peony, Chao Zhou MuDan, and Heze MuDan.*"

Prof. Yu Heng wrote this article for the Bulletin, translated by Li Juan, engineer work in Luoyang Administration of Cultural Relics and Gardens.

Peony (*Paeonia Lactiflora* Pall) in China, is a very popular perennial. They are used in park gardens, cutting flowers and Chinese medicines. They bloom in May, flowers are elegant, dignified, and people use them in landscapes and their gardens.

The peony is native to north China. The history goes back to about 3000 years. The first record in the (Shijing Zheng-Feng), the gentlemen gave the peony to their lover. Now in north China, there are still some wild peonies.

Peonies in China are used in two ways. One is for Chinese medicine, another for admiration. Peonies used in medicine, the Chinese call chi Shu or bai Shue; they are red, white and purple, single flowers. The roots are processed into 'Dan PI' and is very valuable medicine.

Peonies used for admiration have bright colors, as pretty as satin.

In history, Yang show peony is very famous, Song Dynasty (960-1279). Luoyang MuDan (tree peony) Yang Zhou, Sho Yuo peony is known all over China. Most of the peonies grow in Be Jug, Hang Zhou, Ging Dao, Luoyang and Heze. Heze grows about 1200 Mu (198 acres) totaling more than 200 varieties.

Peony propagation ways: (1) stem division, (2) grafting, (3) seeding (used for breeding new varieties.)

The best time for propagation of the three ways is between August to October. Planting space in 70 cm x 90 cm. Medicine peony planting space is 50 cmx 40 cm.

Divisions must be cultivated and will bloom in three years. Cutting flowers and selling to other countries is very little.

We believe that American Peony people will love the Chinese peony very much.



History of a tree peony, and its many moves over the years.

## **PEONY: BETHEL AURORA** (A garden name)

Brought from Bethel, Missouri TO Aurora, Oregon via Wagon Train in 1860, by Nicholas Bier—TO Hubbard, Oregon in 1869—TO Salem, Oregon, Chemeketa & Liberty Sts., 1873—TO Independence, Oregon, 1926—TO Marion County Farm, 1932; relocated 1954—TO Polk County Farm, 1966; relocated 1984; all moves involved entire plant, not cuttings—in same family ownership for 5 generations.

Picture taken in the home where it now grows—Monmouth, Oregon.

\* \* \* \*

A soft rope around your peony bush and anchored to a stake on one side will hold the plant intact during the rainy season.

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# A VISIT WITH BILL KREKLER ON HIS 90TH BIRTHDAY

*Submitted by Roy Klehm*

This past February 18th was Bill Krekler's 90th birthday. Congratulations to one of the Society's prominent peony breeders. Congratulations, also, to a fine gentleman whose love of peonies still comes forth strongly in conversations with him.

My wife, Sarah, and I, had the pleasure of visiting Bill and Alice Krekler right before his birthday in their new home just North of Tucson, Arizona. On a bright sunny, warm day we drove up to his desert home and immediately admired the thoughtful front entrance landscape plantings of cacti, succulents, Arizona Sycamore trees, Redbud and hybrid roses. The front lawn area was an attractive tan desert gravel in keeping with the water conservation practices of the Tucson area.

When Bill answered the door, I asked to see the rest of the garden. Much to my surprise, Bill had hundreds of daylily clones and seedlings all neatly planted in rows along both sides of his home, and covering over half of the backyard area. Bill explained that he had moved his intensive hybridizing program from his previous residence in Whittier, California, with the hopes of continuing this project in Arizona. Bill explained that the daylilies do bloom well enough but because of the intense heat during the bloom season, they are very reluctant to set viable seeds. Bill, however, seemed undaunted and was explaining a shading system he was considering which may help the problem.

We talked about the beautiful area he lives in and he told me of the wild coyotes which have been coming to his back patio to accept the occasional ham bone or other table scraps which he may give them. "Evidently, I have to quit these handouts, as one of my new-found pets growled at both neighbors the other day. The coyotes never growled at me!" Bill also showed me his grapevine arbor where he said the coyotes eat all the grapes as high as they could reach and the Gambils Quail climbed the wall on which the vines were trellished and consumed all the grapes on the top half of the vines. Bill rationalized that maybe his new friends would leave the fruit alone on his newly-set-out 8 dozen fruit trees.

Bill and Alice's home is nicely done in tasteful contemporary Southwestern furniture, punctuated with beautiful peony pictures and Indian hand-made baskets from Hermosilla, Mexico. One of Bill's sons runs the family plant nursery in Hermosilla, and has for some time. Alice capably carried the conversations along, filling Sarah and I in on all the aspects of their new home and surroundings. She and Bill explained some of the people behind the names of a few of Bill's choice peony varieties. Did you know that 'Cora Stubbs' was Alice's mother, and that the variety 'Alice Roberts' was Alice's maiden name? 'Becky' is one of Bill's granddaughters. 'Bessie' is Bill's sister. 'Corrine Wer-

san' is Bill and Alice's daughter. 'Eliza Lundy' is Bill's father's mother, and 'Gladys Hodson' was Alice's college roommate at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana. 'Nellie Saylor' is also Bill's sister. 'Orlando Roberts' is Alice's father. 'Schafe' is Bessie's husband, and 'Martha Reed' worked for Bill for ten years with the peonies.

Bill also told me that he now has 381 peony varieties which he hybridized and named, and 748 hemerocallis varieties to his credit. Wow! 1029 new plant varieties. What a legacy!

The pleasant visit came to an end, and Bill told me when I was leaving, "Living in Arizona is nice, but I really miss my peonies. It's too hot here for them."

## FRAGRANT PEONIES

The following is a list of peonies in which strong fragrance has been noted. All are lactifloras:

**Lois Kelsey, Moonstone, Edulis Superba, Isani Gidui, Bute, Cora Stubbs, Miss America, Pink Lemonade, Winchells White Cap, Krinkled White.**

The following have a light odor:

**LACTIFLORAS — Bowl of Cream, Dorothy J, Festiva Maxima, Kelways Glorious, Sylver, Norma Volz, Doris Cooper, Mrs. FDR, Pillow Talk, Martha Bulloch, Princess Margaret, Raspberry Sundae, Philippe Revoire, Do Tell, Gay Patee, Pico.**

**HYBRIDS — Moonrise, Prairie Moon, Coral Charm, Coral Supreme, Friendship, Red Charm, Chocolate Soldier, Scarlet O Hara, Diana Parks, Postilion, Bright Knight, Angelo Cobb Freeborn, Burma Ruby.** The last of these is the only variety with a fragrance I would call pleasant.

The following have no odor that can be discerned:

**LACTIFLORAS — Dinner Plate, Lottie Dawson Rea, Nick Shaylor, Mary Brand.**

**HYBRIDS — Janice, Salmon Glow, Victoria Lincoln, Flame, R. W. Auten, Walter Mains, Heritage.**

There are several others in the garden, and I have not been able to ascertain whether they have a fragrance or not, since I prefer to wait a few years before ruling out fragrance.

— *William Uhde, Sandy Hook, Connecticut*

\* \* \* \*

**MY DREAM (Bill Krekler)**—At age 90, one does have time to dream. If I were starting to hybridize peonies again, I would buy a few of the better species (officinalis, etc.), and also the following ten charmers, listed in order of desirability (probably from Klehm): **BEV. KREKLER'S CHOICE, BRIDES DREAM, WESTERNER, DAD, GOLLY, BESSIE, BECKY, MISS MARY and DAWN PINK.**

# PEONY

by Florence Du Cane

(Printed around the turn of the Century)

Submitted by Slavko and Sue Zivojnovich, Robbinsdale, Minnesota

The wisteria and peony seem to be closely associated, as not only do they flower at the same time and many gardens seem devoted to their combined culture, but just as in Japanese literature the wisteria is an emblem of womanhood, so in Chinese literature the peony is compared to a beautiful woman. The peony seems to be a plant of Chinese origin, and though it can hardly be classed as one of the most popular flowers of Japan, it plays an important part in the art of the country. The tree peony is a delicate plant and requires scrupulous care and nursing in order that its blooms should attain their full size and color. It is regarded as essentially the rich man's flower, and therefore it is often called the "flower of prosperity;" another fancy name by which it is known is the "plant of twenty days," because it will preserve its freshness and beauty for that time. The celebrated garden at Honjo in Tokyo combines the cultivation of botan (tree peony) with that of wisteria. A fine old vine of multijuga overhangs the pond; but one of the especial features of the garden is the cultivation of wisterias in pots and tubs—some grand old plants, flowering as though they would flower themselves to death. Others there were of all sizes and shapes; some bent and leaning, some bearing veritable canopies of blossoms; some pure white, some the pale mauve *sinensis*, and others the deeper-colored multijuga.

My first visit to "view the peonies" was rather a disappointment to me, as, in order to protect the blooms from heavy rain or wind storms, the plants are all placed under the cover of temporary matting sheds. They seemed mostly to be grown in pots, and the effect of these rows of plants, each with its large and heavy blossoms supported by bamboo stakes, was somewhat stiff and prim. A few stray plants were there, which, possibly for some slight defect in the shape or color of the blooms, had not been included in the show collection; and to the uninhibited these gave most pleasure, left standing in the open, their color blending harmoniously with that of the wisteria blossoms. The peony gardens seemed no haunt for the holiday-maker, but rather for the serious-minded gardener, who, truly interested in their culture, would spend hours in quiet contemplation of the plants, discussing the merits of the different varieties with some fellow enthusiast. There were some hundred different kinds of the tree peony. The most prized ones were all either pure white blossoms, or those whose color ranged from pale pink to red—quite rightly, however rare they may be, the purple-hued and yellow are less valued. Many a private garden belonging to the rich has its peony show, and the plants are mostly brought from the neighborhood of Nara, which is celebrated for its peony gardens. And the gardens at Kabata are also famous for their blooms;

where, too, may be seen the combination of the fuju flowers covering long trellises and the little standard trees growing along the margin of the stream, their pendant trails reflected in the water, softening, as it were, the gorgeous splendor of the flaunting peony blossoms.

There is no more gorgeous floral sight than the peony with its tremendous curling petals; but a Japanese artist told me that its fullness in splendor made those with a better poetical fancy and more quiet taste dislike it, and think the beauty of the peony to be even vulgar. Japan is nothing if she be not light and airy, and therefore the Japanese consider flowers with more delicate grace to be more artistic; so the peony has little chance to become their favorite flower; its beauty is too heavy. It has found, however, some admirers among the poets of Western Japan. In comparison to the people of the eastern provinces, the inhabitants of Osaka and Kyoto are said to be more showy in their taste, their art is heavier, so the peony is called the Western Flower of Japan. If you compare China and Japan, the former's taste in art is more decorative and heavier, and remember what a favorite, the peony, is as a decoration for their priceless porcelain. The variety of peony known as *Peonia sinensis*, the true Chinese peony, does not seem to be much regarded in Japan, and little attention seems to be given to its cultivation.

The botan calls to mind the peony lantern, and the peony lantern or botan toro is suggestive of the Buddhist festival of Bon (from July 13-16), when the great gates of Hades will open wide, and those dead souls who are still wandering about, being unable to enter Nirvana, will come back again to receive their relatives' prayers, by whose virtue they may get their final rest. So this festival is universally called the Soul Festival: in literature it is closely connected with ghosts. The theatres will all play "ghost plays," as, of course, the story of the peony lantern is a ghost story.

A beautiful girl called O Tsuyu was the daughter of a certain samurai, Ijima San, who lived apart from her father with her faithful maid, O Yone. She happened to love Shinzaburo Ogihara, a young samurai, and died of love, and her maid followed her. Ogihara did not know of their death. He observed one summer evening that two young women—who were O Tsuyu and O Yone—passed before the gate of his house, carrying peony lanterns in their hands, and he welcomed them. During the following seven nights, O Tsuyu called on him at night with her usual peony lantern in hand; and then Shinzaburo was told by his friend that she was not a living person, but a ghost. He appealed to some holy priest to protect him from the ghost. The priest gave him some charm to hang at his door; and when the charm, one night, was taken away, Ogihara was found dead the next morning.

There is a rather charming ghost story of the peony which is of Chinese origin; the story is called the Ko Gyoku or Incense Jewel. Kaseikyū of Rozan, of fairy beauty, is famous for its peonies. In

Kaseikyu there lived a young scholar called Kosei. He was looking out of his window one day, and to his amazement he observed a beautiful young lady dressed in white who stood among the peonies. He saw her so often that he fell in love with her, and wrote a love song dedicated to her fair soul. Then she appeared as in a dream to him one day and said, "My name is Ko Gyoku; I was brought here from the city of Heiko, and my life is not without sadness." They promised to love each other, they continued to meet every day, till one day Ko Gyoku told him sadly that she had to go away; and the next morning, strange to say, Kosei observed that the peonies in the garden had disappeared. Was she not the spirit of one of the peonies? He passed day and night in sad dreams and with many tears, thinking over his unhappy fate in love. To his surprise, Ko Gyoku appeared after a long time, and they held each other's hands, but the man found the lady's hand cold. Ko Gyoku said, "Yesterday I was the living spirit of the flower, but today I am merely the ghost. My body is cold, the flower is dead." However, she was to his eyes as beautiful as before. She continued, "If you will be kind enough to give a cupful of water to the roots of the old peonies every day, you will receive a reward in due course of time," and disappeared. Kosei found the next morning that new sprouts were beginning to come out from the old roots.

The peony was introduced into Japan from China in the eighth century, but failed to gain universal popularity, on account of the difficulty of cultivating it successfully; but the Rich Man's Flower came to be regarded as the king of flowers, and therefore the lion and the peacock, the kings of the animal world, are its companions in art. They are always painted together in the decoration of a temple or palace wall, and when lions dance on the Japanese stage they always have a gorgeous background of peonies. There may be more of myth than truth in the pretty story of Ichinenki, a kind of peony whose flowers turned crimson when Yo Ki Hi (the beloved mistress of the Emperor Genso, famous in Chinese history in connection with the peony) accidentally touched the petals of the flower with her rouged fingertips, when she appeared in the garden after finishing her morning toilette.

So strong is the feeling among Japanese poets that the flower is lacking in any poetical grace, that the poet Hyoroku remarks in his Essay on a Hundred Flowers, "The peony is like the mistress glorified in one's love, who acts as she pleases without any consideration for another's feeling. It has such an attitude, as if it spit out a rainbow into the blue sky." The poet Bushon, who has written more lines on the peony than any other poet, says—

Niji wo haite  
Hirakanto suru  
Botan hana.

(Spitting forth a rainbow  
Is about to bloom  
The peony flower.)



# SPONTANEOUS PEONIES IN ITALY

*Dr. Gian Lupo Osti*

As told already in my previous article in the BULLETIN, my favorite pastime is to walk in the mountains around the Mediterranean: there is always something to see and to learn and not just from the naturalistic but also from the artistic and historical point of view. Searching for *P. mlokosewitschi* in the AntiCaucasus, on the turkish side of the border with USSR, I fell into the ruins of an old Genoese castle and this was the starting point of a lot of constructive reading on how all this was organized in ancient times to transport silk and other oriental goods from the far east to Trabzon along the silkway. All the way around from the Black Sea to the Portuguese Sierras in view of the Atlantic coast, you may find different species of peonies from *P. mlokosewitschi* and *wittmanniana*, to *P. broteri* and *coriacea*.

I have had more opportunities to observe peonies in my country—that is in Italy. As a matter of fact we have in Italy four species of herbaceous peonies (helas! as everybody knows tree peonies in the wild can be found only in China). I hope to have this long sought-after opportunity, next April, to go there. The species with the larger diffuseness is, no doubt, *P. officinalis* L. s.s. which can be found all over in the Alps and in the Apennines. In the latest Italian Flora it is written that *P. peregrina* Miller is restricted just to a Valley in Central Apennines, about 150 km ENE from Rome, but it was reported in 1912 as existing in Calabria. I have to confess that I was never able to understand what is the discriminating difference between *P. officinalis* and *peregrina*. In some books it is written that *P. peregrina* has foliage sometimes pilose above, but there is a sub species of *P. officinalis* which is called *P. officinalis* ssp *villosa* (Huth) Cullen et Heywood and it also has hairy leaves above. This criterion of identification by major or minor hairiness is very confusing. In *The Peonies*, the book published by the American Horticultural Society, it is written that *P. peregrina* is completely glabrous and this is the unique difference with *P. arietina*!

In “*A Study of the Genus Paeonia*,” F. C. Stern says that *P. peregrina* can be easily distinguished from all other peonies of the same section by the segments and division of the leaves which are lobed and coarsely toothed at the apex and by its concave petals, but I found those characteristics also in some peonies from localities where never any *P. peregrina* was identified but just *P. officinalis*.

It is my opinion, an amateur and a plantsman, that there is no perceivable difference between *P. officinalis* and *P. peregrina* seen in the wild respectively in Southern Italy and Turkey. *P. mascula* Miller can be found in the Eastern Alps and from Tuscany all the way down to the South, including both Sardinia and Sicily. Finally, *P. coriacea* Boissi can be seen in Sardinia, but I find it almost impossible to trace a separation between this species and *P. mascula* ssp. *russi* (Biv.) Cullen

et Heywood which is rare in Calabria and Sicily, and much more frequent in Sardinia and Corsica. Do not conclude that I am spreading around information with doubts and confusion! As a matter of fact, I have to confess that I am a grouper and not a splitter. When I am in the wild and I discover a peony in bloom, I prefer to look at the plant and at the scenery, filling my eyes and my brain with all the beauty I can absorb, not caring very much if the leaves and the carpels are more or less pubescent! Anyway, back home I start to compare doggedly the description in the literature with my observation, and I hope now to have persuaded a group of professional botanists of the Rome University, to start a scientifically rigorous study of peonies native in Italy, using plants originated by seed collected by me in the wild.



**LADY KATE** (*Vories 1924*); tall, double late light pink, very strong stems.

# THE FINER POINTS OF PEONIES

*By Andy Rocchia, Oregon*

*(Andy Rocchia is a West Linn Garden Writer, Oregon.)*

Today's gardener can be thankful for many things. Consider, for example, the breakthroughs in plant science, which have brought all sorts of improved varieties of trees, shrubs and other plants. Or take stock of the array of well-crafted tools, many of which were not available 50—even 20—years ago.

If you need more evidence, think about the numerous plants that can be grown successfully in almost every part of Oregon.

Consider, for example, the peony, which thrives in this area. Among the herbaceous perennials—those plants that die down over winter only to appear the subsequent Spring—the peony reigns supreme. Great variety exists—from the lovely singles to the semidoubles resembling water lilies and the gorgeous double forms. Furthermore, the diversity of habit of growth and foliage is marvelous. Leaves of some peonies are divided and fernlike; others are broad and strong. Some peonies are bushy and dwarf; others are medium in height and spreading, while others are tall and bold.

And as late as it is, you can still plant peonies. Though it's late for bare-root planting, I recently put in roots from divisions of plants I lifted five weeks ago and stored temporarily in my sawdust-filled nursery bin. The divisions came from two choice, older plants—a gorgeous, hot-pink single called "Flame," and a sumptuous, double, pale-yellow variety known as "Prairie Moon." Needless to say, mid-to-late Autumn is the best time for moving peonies, but in early Spring they can be planted safely—providing you find some healthy plants growing in containers in the nursery yard.

The motivated will want to start scouting out places for peonies right away. The plants make lovely companions for all kinds of sun-loving shrubs, from callicarpa and hebes to heathers. But give them plenty of space: they don't like being disturbed.

Most peonies don't spread very fast. After three years in most gardens, a herbaceous-type peony will form a circular clump as much as 4 feet across at the base. A 5-year-old clump can produce many dozens of main-stem blossoms—not counting side buds.

I love peonies so much that four years ago I made an approximately 20-by-40-foot-long border just for peonies, at the turn in the driveway. In the border are two dozen kinds, including several tree peonies and a few of the old-fashioned "bomb" types, such as venerable white "Festiva Maxima." I also included a newer item called "Moonstone," a gorgeous, double white with petals edged in pale pink.

Primarily, though, my collection runs to newer single and semidouble types with five or 10 petals and the anemone types with their large, open centers. Among my favorites are "White Innocence,"

which boasts single, white blossoms with a striking green center, and "Gay Paree," a knockout with creamy-white, frilly centers surrounded by deep-pink petals. "Gay Paree," by the way, can reach heights of 4 feet.

If you have space for three or four plants, consider using peonies as accents. Even when out of blooms, the peony's lovely foliage merits year-round interest. In most cases, the foliage turns every sunset hue in the Fall.

Lovely combinations can be made with other plants. One of the prettiest I ever saw was in a Seattle garden where the owner let a maroon-leaved *Rosa rubrifolia* ramble among her pink peonies. Sun lovers, peonies look especially well with such small perennials as cranesbills. In May, peonies can add just the right amount of green texture and bloom color around flowering weigels, lilacs and mock orange.

Note: When you shop for peonies, be prepared for some high prices. The better varieties are not cheap. Four years ago, for example, while strolling up and down the rows of Al and Dot Rogers' Caprice Nursery in Sherwood, I was stunned by the sight of what might be called the Marilyn Monroe of the peony world—a huge, long-stemmed, deep-red peony. In a state of infatuation, I ordered it without asking the price.

When my order arrived from the nursery, my wife was somewhat surprised at the size of the bill for the half-dozen or so plants and wondered out loud which plant cost \$25.

"A peony root. It's called 'Old Faithful.' "

To which she countered, "At that price, it had better well be!"

## WHY PEONIES DO NOT BLOOM

Planted too deeply . . . examine, and if eyes are more than 2" under ground, raise to proper height. Buds killed by late frost; attacked by thrips; water logged; killed by disease. Plants too young; undernourished; undermined by moles or gophers; receive too much shade and not enough sunshine; moved and divided too often; planted too near trees and shrubs, or crowded by other plants; receiving too much nitrogen . . . cut down on fertilizer rich in nitrogen. Ground too dry . . . water down to bottom of roots.

## LETTERS

My fragrant peonies include **Mons Jules Elie**, **Festiva Maxima** and also **Myra McRae**. Yesterday I went to the New York annual garden show in Manhattan. One of the things that encouraged me to fight the traffic and parking problems was to see the peonies and tree peony in bloom! I had seen on TV that a beautiful tree peony was in bloom and on display. I did see it and it was lovely, and on the label the name was carefully written in Japanese "HANA-NO-NAMA." This exhibitor has the same problem with names as I do with many of my tree peonies.

A few yards away grew the most fascinating clump of peonies, large flowered (perhaps 8" on some stems), dark rose with generous yellow stamens in the center. I could not guess what it was but as I drew nearer, unbelieving, I wondered if it could be **WESTERNER**, only extremely well grown. When I finally got close enough to read the name, it said **LARGO**, which I've seen in the catalogs but never in the flesh. It is darker than **WESTERNER**. If I can find another spot in my yard, I'll know what to order. It was magnificent.

Speaking of ordering spectacular plants, last Fall I ordered "WHITE CAP" which I had seen on Long Island in bloom. It had been on my wish list for a long time and it was years before I saw it for sale in the Wild Catalog. It will be a thrill if it blooms this Spring (June). It is similar to **GAY PAREE**, only larger, petals much darker, and center white. It is a phenomenon and I believe very scarce.

To change the subject, do you have a Daylily named after you? There is one called **GRETA** in some of the catalogs that I have seen. I often wondered if you were the inspiration or even knew about it. Of course, it should be a peony, named **GRETA**. Thank you for your work for the Society.

—*Helen S. Darnow, New York*

\* \* \* \*

My peonies were just fine this past year. There are so many new varieties that I would like to plant, but at age 85, perhaps, I might not have time to see them at mature beauty. I retired after 22 years on the air with Southwest Gardening shows, both in TV and talk. I love the talk shows the best, and many of my listeners call me at home. I was given the first 'Masters Gardening Award,' not for just participating in the Master Gardening group, but for past work and my book, 'Southwest Gardening.' My one wish for the American Peony Society would be that some pictures be in color. I know this is expensive, but black and white does not show up the beauty of the flower.

—*Mrs. George L. Doolittle, Albuquerque, New Mexico*

\* \* \* \*

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

— 27 —

1989 was a very good year for the peonies as the entire year was dry which is ideal for our peonies. This Winter has been mild; no frost so far, and I do not expect any. In weeding my garden in November, I found a peony stem in bud, transplanted it in the greenhouse, but lost it to botrytis. Then in December I found another one, and transplanted this one in the greenhouse also. It is growing, about six inches tall, so foliage and the bud are 3/4 in. in diameter. It is one of the species; I think peregrine. With this heat and cold treatment, we could get unusual flowering season.

Many thanks for your devotion to the Society.

—*Theodore Person, Jersey, Channel Isle, Great Britain*  
(*Mr. Person is a commercial grower of cut flowers.*)

\* \* \* \*

Mr. Frank Moots writes that he and his wife visited Luoyang, China. Of special interest were the tree peony nurseries. There were no plants in bloom, but the plantings and care given them were excellent.

When he was in Moscow, he saw his hybrids growing in the Kremlin Gardens.

—*Frank Moots, Newton, Kansas*

\* \* \* \*

I had been pondering how to save some peonies for my daughter's wedding in September. Then the March BULLETIN arrived. Not only did it give good information for holding buds in dry storage (thank you, T. G. Bryne), but also was the answer to my problem. I will dry some of my best and now to wait for bloom time, early May. Since childhood, my year has revolved around the days the peonies would bloom. I live in a mobile home, in a mobile park and have fifteen herbaceous peonies. This year I turned my small vegetable garden over to nine tree peonies. Fortunately, we have an excellent grower's market near where I can buy tomatoes. Now I have a powerful reason to go to China to see the Luoyang Peony Fair. This must be peony lover's heaven! Is anyone offering a group tour?

Thank you again, Greta, for your excellent work and always just what is needed in the BULLETIN.

Whichever peony that is in front of me, is my favorite peony for the moment. I do not have a favorite; all are my favorites. The old white double peony with red flecks that grew in my grandmother's garden, is beautiful. A white anemone type with yellow or ivory tufted center will become the dried flower for my daughter's wedding. The mauve tree peony, with wine hearts and edges, and the white tree peony called "Flight of Cranes:" the yellow tree peony with orange-maroon flares and edges, has given me so much beauty and pleasure.

Filloli Gardens, south of San Francisco, has a lovely garden of tree peonies.

—*Jane K. Hsuan, Grass Valley, California*

— 28 —

After my first year as a novice of growing species in my southern home at Shreveport, Louisiana, I want to share my excitement about the different varieties growing and blooming in the south where they are not recommended because of the heat. We had a severe cold front that came in December, which was unusual. It was 6° for three days or so. After that, we had the mildest winter on record since 1921. Now we have had twice the rainfall than average during March and April of this year. The flower buds of peonies survive much better than the rose buds during the rain.

**RED GLORY** bloomed on March 15. The following varieties were so beautiful; **RED COMET, KANSAS, CRUSADER, MISS AMERICA, RED RED ROSE, FELIX SUPREME, PRAIRIE MOON, BONANZA, DETROIT, BIG BEN, CAROL, RED GRACE, PAUL M. WILD, SHAWNEE CHIEF, and MAESTRO.** I have several **RED CHARMS** and they are so beautiful!

Now I would like to be bold and try some early midseason varieties as I was advised to plant hybrids and early blooming peonies. Names of these peonies would be appreciated. I would like more hybrids and Japanese types also.

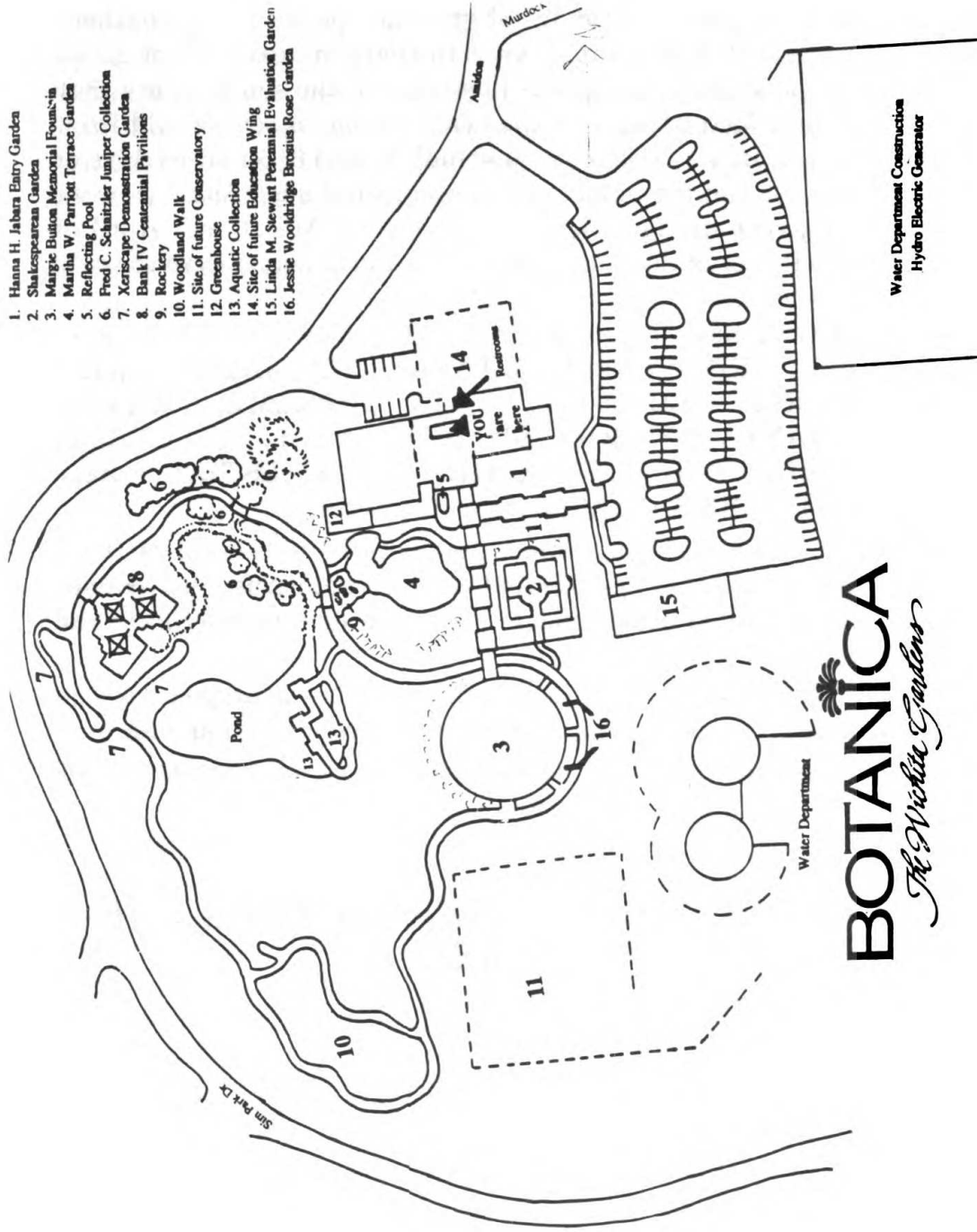
All the blooms on my peonies had flowers that averaged from an orange to a large grapefruit in size. Some 5-6 inches in diameter.

—*Henry J. Cangelose, 4332 South Fairway Dr., Shreveport, LA 71109*

\* \* \* \*

## **SOME PEONY DON'TS—HERBACEOUS AND HYBRIDS**

1. Don't divide plants less than two years old.
2. Don't plant big clumps or big roots.
3. Don't permit manure to come in contact with the roots.
4. Don't plant too deep or you will have no bloom. Two or three inches to the topmost bud is deep enough.
5. Don't try to divide the plant immediately after digging it up. Let it stand in the air for an hour or two.
6. Don't split roots when dividing if you can possibly avoid it.
7. Don't plant where peonies have grown before without changing the soil.
8. Don't fail to disbud if you want larger blooms.
9. Do not start watering unless you can keep it up and do not merely sprinkle the surface. This does little good. They will endure dry weather amazingly well. Even though the plants die down, prematurely, from drought, they will usually come up and grow the next year as well as ever. It is a noteworthy fact that all hard-to-open varieties will bloom well, following a dry summer.



## BOTANICA The Wichita Gardens, Wichita, Kansas



# **BOTANICA**

## **The Wichita Gardens**

A few years ago American Peony Society members were asked to contribute roots to Botanica. Those roots have survived and prospered. No herbaceous roots have been lost, however, three or four tree peonies failed to make it. This was probably because they had to be transplanted two Falls in a row.

The season this year will be early—blooms from about the tenth of April 'til about May 16. An average year will have blooms from about April 20 'til May 26.

The plants are located in five different places. About a dozen herbaceous and one tree peony are located at the north end of the Shakespearean Garden. Three or four tree peonies to the right of junction of the walk from the entry to the Margie Button Memorial Fountain and the curved walk which runs approximately East and West. The rest of the herbaceous peonies are around the West half of the Margie Button Memorial Fountain. They are in two staggered rows and are not separated by blooming season, so may present random patterns of bloom at any one time.

There are three tree peonies between the curved bath and a rock wall, near the place where a path goes to the pond. Three or four more tree peonies are just off the path where it passes the West end of the greenhouse.

Botanica has received tremendous support from the community. All local Nurseries, Garden Clubs, Flower societies and throngs of individuals have provided volunteer labor and materials.

This year there are seven Flower Shows scheduled: African Violets: 3/10 and 3/11; Orchid Show: 3/31 and 4/1; Iris Early Show: 4/21; Rose Show 5/20; Cactus and Geranium Show: 5/26 and 5/27; and Rose Show 10/7.

There are Luncheon Lectures Thursdays in March and Wednesdays after that. Lunch is served starting in April on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

With the wide variety of plants there is something to see nearly all year long. In the dead of winter, when there are almost no blooms, admission is free just in case you only wanted to see the Grounds. However, in Winter they are not open on weekends.

When passing through Wichita on U.S. 54, take the Northbound Seneca St. exit (half mile w Arkansas River), drive North on Seneca about eight or nine blocks and cross the river again, keeping to the left turn lane. Go left again to Sim Park Dr., then hold right 'til you reach the parking lot entry which will be on the right. You will have passed the other three Museums on The River (Wichita All Indian Center, Wichita Art Museum and Wichita Old Cowtown Museum) in the last half mile of your drive.

—*Edward Lee Michau*

# BOTRYTIS BLIGHT

*Cornell Extension Bulletin #321*

Of the several diseases to which peonies are susceptible, Botrytis blight should receive first consideration as the most common and generally destructive. Various reports in the literature would indicate that the disease occurs in practically all regions in temperate North America and Europe where peonies are grown. The chief losses from Botrytis blight are the destruction of young shoots early in the spring and the blighting or rotting of the buds and flowers. In addition, the foliage may be blighted, thus serving to reduce the vigor of the plants as well as to detract from their ornamental value.

## Symptoms

Early in the spring, the causal fungus attacks the young succulent shoots and causes them to wilt suddenly and to topple. Shoots in all stages of growth, up to and including those showing buds, are susceptible to this type of injury, which is characterized by a soft brown rot of the stem that extends above and below the surface of the soil. In rare instances, the rot may extend down into the roots. Small buds, when attacked, cease growth and turn black. A bud blast similar in appearance to that produced by Botrytis blight can result from other causes, such as Phytophthora blight, poor vigor of the plants, and too deep planting. When older buds are affected, the petals become watery and matted, turn brown, and die. In later stages, the rot may extend down the flower stem for a considerable distance. Open flowers, when attacked, turn brown, droop, and become a rotted mass of petals. Infected leaves exhibit circular or triangular lesions with zonations of dark and light brown. The lesions vary considerably in size and in some instances may involve an entire leaflet. The fungus may grow down through an infected leaf into the stem where a typical brown canker is formed.

## Cause

Botrytis blight is caused by the fungus *Botrytis paeoniae* Oud. which overwinters both as dormant mycelium or small, brown to black sclerotia on infested stems and other plant debris. With the advent of rains and warm weather in early spring, large numbers of microscopic spores or seeds are developed in grape-like clusters. Splashing rain, air currents, or insects serve to carry these spores to the young peony shoots, where they germinate and cause the primary infections. As the young shoots wilt and rot, additional spores are formed on the diseased areas, and these in turn are carried to leaves, buds, and stems which have subsequently developed. In this connection, the role played by ants in carrying spores to the buds should be emphasized. The sugary exudate which commonly covers the developing peony buds is a great attraction to ants. While climbing the stems to obtain this sweet liquid, the ants may become dusted with large numbers of spores which adhere to the sticky buds, produce infection, and cause the typical bud-blast condition.

## Control

Measures for the control of Botrytis blight should begin with a thorough clean-up each fall. As soon as the tops have died down, all stems, leaves, and other plant debris should be carefully gathered and burned. Many of the better growers go to the extent of pulling the soil away from the crowns thus to cut off the stems as close as possible to the roots. Experience has proved that sanitation of this sort will serve to destroy the overwintering pathogene and materially reduce, if not completely eliminate, infection the following season. The effective control to be gained from this practice for Botrytis blight and many other diseases of the peony cannot be emphasized too much.

The following spring, all rotted or wilting shoots should be removed and destroyed as soon as detected. It is also advisable to remove infected leaves and buds in the same manner. If a mulch has been used for winter protection, the covering should be removed early in the spring, to prevent damp conditions around the young shoots. One or two applications of bordeaux spray early in the season have been suggested by some workers. In general, however, the results obtained with sprays or dusts have not been satisfactory for the control of Botrytis blight.

Certain cultural practices will also prove beneficial. Thus, when making new plantings, the clumps should be given adequate space in order to prevent the development of large dense clusters, which serve to promote conditions favorable to attacks of the fungus. For the same reason, old established plantings should be dug and divided when necessary. The use of sunny, open exposures will aid considerably in preventing serious epidemics of the Botrytis blight disease.

Field observations indicate that peony varieties vary widely with regard to relative susceptibility to the disease.

## ROOT-KNOT

During the past few years, a disease known as root-knot has apparently become increasingly severe and prevalent on peonies. The disease is by no means confined solely to the peony. It has been reported on the roots of a large number of other plants, including weeds, food crops, and ornamentals. Although widely distributed in the eastern United States, the disease is more severe in those regions having warm growing seasons and mild winters.

### Symptoms

When affected with root-knot, peonies are markedly stunted, produce spindly short stems with small, light-colored leaves, and form few or no flower buds. When removed from the soil it will be observed that the large fleshy roots are short and irregularly knotted or swollen. Numerous small galls of varying size and shape will be found on the feeding rootlets.

### Cause

Root-knot is caused by a microscopic, soil-inhabiting nematode (eelworm) known as *Heterodera marioni* (Cornu) Goodey. The nematodes gain entrance into the peony roots by piercing the tissues with the small spears in their head. The presence of nematodes within the

roots excite the cells to abnormal enlargement, and the typical knots or galls result. Such roots are unable to transfer water and nutrients from the soil, and thus the vital physiological processes of the plants are seriously interfered with. Once introduced into an area on infected plant parts, the eelworms multiply rapidly and are disseminated by their own movements or by cultivation, running water, and other similar means. Eelworms overwinter in the soil or within infected roots.

### Control

Although various methods have been suggested for the control of root-knot, it should be pointed out that the disease is a difficult problem with which to cope. For a small gardener, the simplest procedure is to destroy all infected peonies. Healthy plants should then be obtained and set out in nematode-free soil.

The reduction in nematode population can be hastened by leaving the land fallow or by growing non-susceptible crops in such areas. Among the crops suitable for this purpose are the Iron varieties of cowpeas, the broad beans, the coarse grasses, and most varieties of wheat. Since root-knot is always more abundant on light, sandy soils than on heavy clays, peonies should be planted in the heavier soils.

### STEM ROT

Stem rot is one of the less common diseases to which the peony is susceptible. With optimum environmental conditions, however, the disease can become exceedingly destructive, particularly after the plants attain full growth.

### Symptoms

While peonies affected with stem rot exhibit many of the symptoms described for the *Botrytis* or *Phytophthora* blights, the disease can be distinguished by the presence under some conditions of a white moldy growth on the affected plant parts and more particularly by the large black sclerotia which are formed in the centers of the diseased stems.

### Cause

Stem rot is caused by the soil-inhabiting fungus *Sclerotinia sclerotiorum* (Lib.) DeBary. This fungus attacks a considerable number of plants, vegetables as well as ornamentals, and is therefore likely to be introduced into a garden through the practice of mulching with various kinds of litter.

### Control

Sanitation should receive special attention in the control of stem rot. The removal and destruction of all plant debris will aid materially in reducing the number of sclerotia by means of which the fungus overwinters or is disseminated from place to place. In severe infections, the affected plants should be dug up and burned. When the infection is less severe, it will sometimes pay the grower to cut away the diseased portions and reset the plants in a new location in soil free from the causal fungus. In gardens where stem rot has been a problem, it is always advisable to keep manure away from the crowns of the plants,

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**HOW TO CUT PEONIES**

*L. W. Lindgren, St. Paul, Minnesota*

*Bulletin # 124, 1952*

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

Setting dates for peony shows which would suit all gardens is obviously impossible. Some gardens are early and some are late. Some peonies are early and some are late. The best plan is therefore to hold the show late in the season so that early and late gardens as well as early and late peonies may be represented. In order to do this it becomes necessary to cut the peonies at the proper time and place them in cold storage. A temperature of thirty-six degrees is best but a temperature as high as fifty degrees is satisfactory if the blooms are to be stored for a week or less. Blooms can be kept for over a month when stored at thirty-six degrees. An important point to remember is that even blooms cut the day before the show will benefit from a chilling of several hours. Peonies are best stored with the stems in about eight inches of water.

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

As the buds develop to near the cutting stage, paper bags should be placed over the buds and held in place with a rubber band. Be sure to make a couple of holes in the bag in order to provide ventilation. If this is not done the buds may be injured if the temperature is high. If the buds have not been bagged before cutting be sure to place the buds in bags before placing in storage. The procedure is this: cut a hole in the bottom of the bag and slip the stem thru the hole, the one end of the bag is then closed by twisting. The bag gives protection to the petals against bruising. The one-pound bag is about the right size for singles, Japs and semi-doubles while the two pound bag is more satisfactory for the larger and fuller blooms.

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

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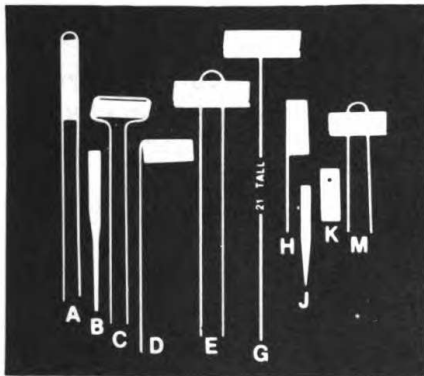
*Compiled and edited by Greta M. Kessenich in cooperation with the nomenclature committee of the American Peony Society.*

Serious peony growers now have access to another monumental work designed to identify historic peony varieties and their originations as well as exciting new varieties registered with the American Peony Society in the last decade. Handy new 6x9-inch spiral-bound book with full color front and back covers is printed on heavy stock for heavy field use. Nomenclature committee: Roy G. Klehm, Marvin C. Karrels and Don Hollingsworth, past presidents of the American Peony Society.

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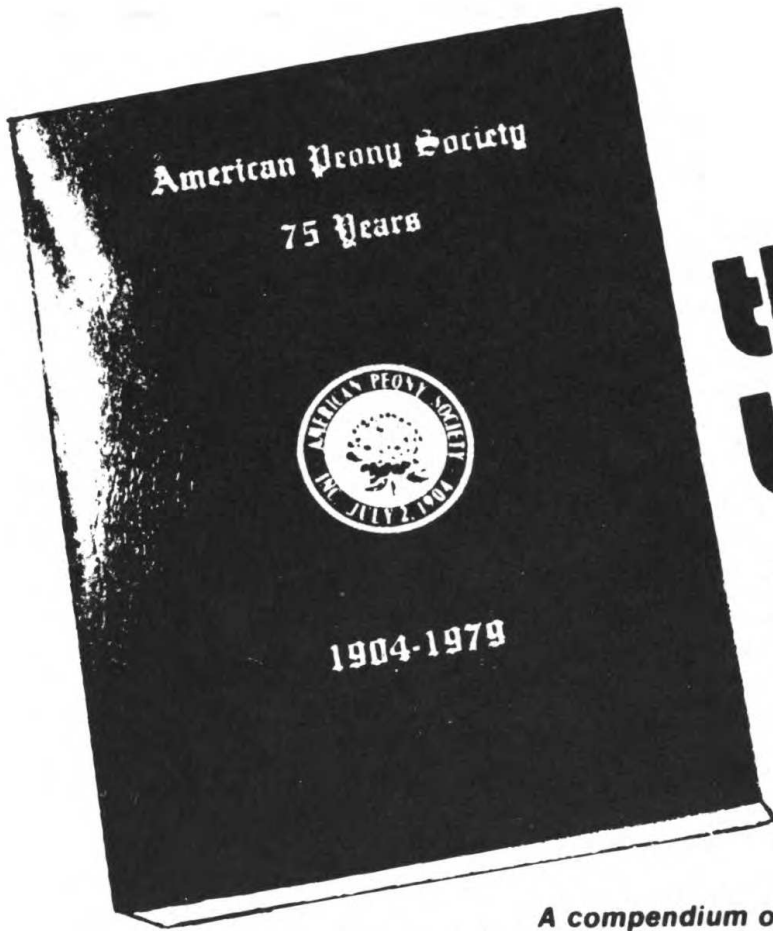
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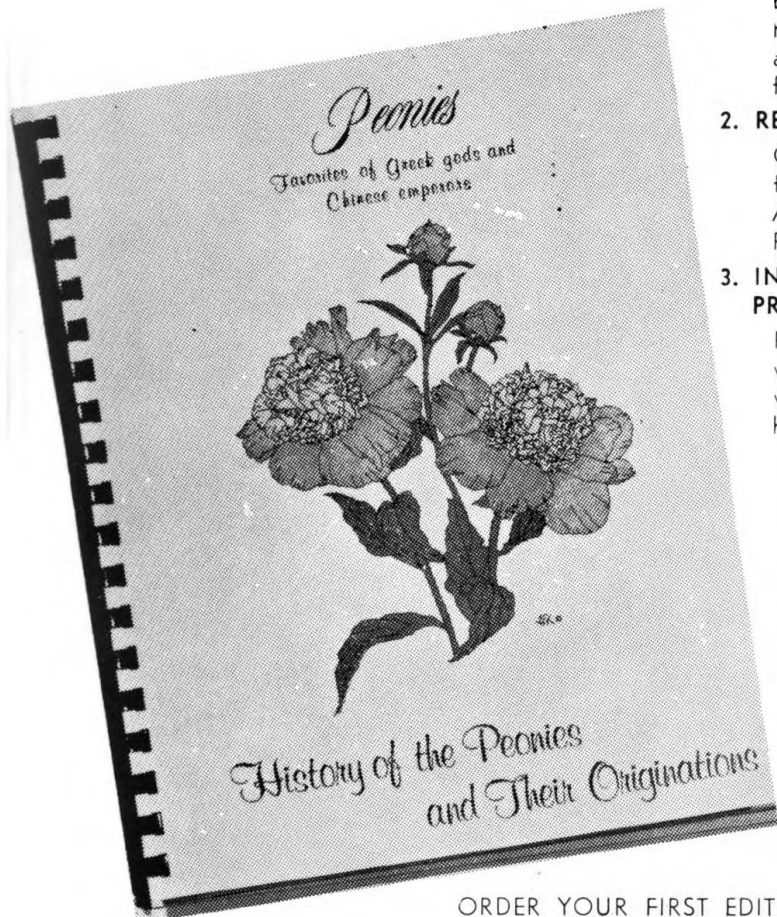
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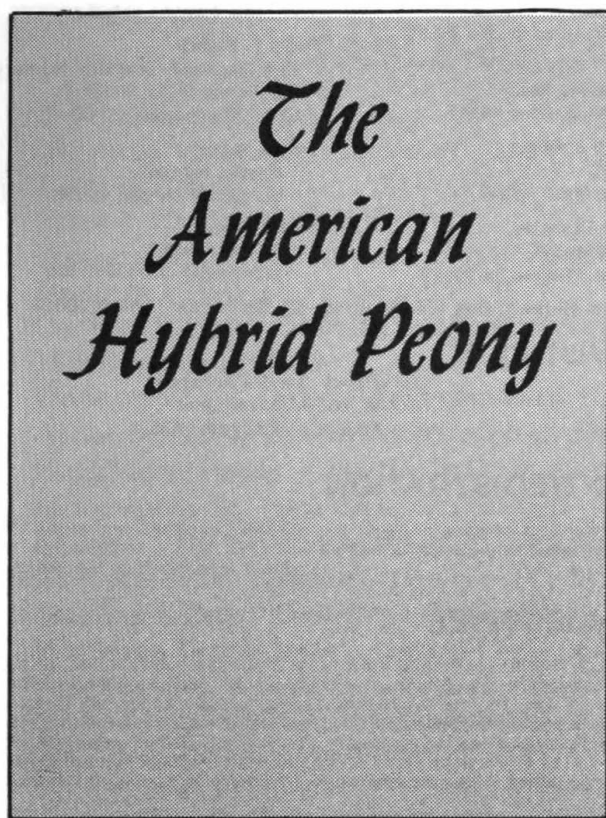
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