

# *The Heartland Peony Society*

## *Kokuryu Nishiki*



Kokuryu Nishiki is from Japan and seems to do well here in the Midwest. The flower is very large and the petals are ruffled on the edges. Each petal is edged in white and they show white veining that makes the flower have the effect of a very large parrot tulip.

Photo by Leon Pesnell

### **The Heartland Peony Society Fall Events**

**October 7, 2006**

**Fall Program by Scott Reath**

**9:30 am at the Discovery Center**

**4750 Troost Avenue, Kansas City, Missouri**

**Potluck & Auction**

**713 White Oak Lane Gladstone, MO**

**6:00 pm**

**Fall 2006 Newsletter**

## **Presidents Message**

**By Leon Pesnell**

**My word! We here in the Midwest have gone from one of the mildest winters on record to a very hot and dry summer. What a joy it was to receive recent rain here in the central region of the Heartland. Water bills may actually go down for the next few months.**

**I do hope that you had the opportunity to view new and different peonies in bloom this past spring for prospects as additions to your own yard. My 'want list' certainly exceeds my purchase ability but that is part of enjoying peonies as a hobby. The plants that I acquired last fall have performed well this year and some plants that have been growing 3 years or more now will be divided to increase plants for other areas of my yard, for sharing, or for trading for other peonies that I wish to acquire.**

**There are so many opportunities through the year in which we can engage in our peony hobby. Without a doubt, our favorite time of the year is spring when peonies burst forth in all their glory. Spring is an exciting time and your opportunity to begin to make selections for additions to your own landscape.**

**This past month we had a grafting workshop with about 15 HPS members in attendance. Late summer is the best time to graft tree peonies. If you have not tried this to increase the number of tree peonies you have, then it is time you tried. If you have a friend with a tree peony in bloom that you admire then ask for a scion or two. Cutting scions from tree peonies in late summer does not harm the tree peony. For instructions on completing the graft you can check out our website at <http://www.peonies.org>.**

**Of course fall is the time to plant new peonies or divide older clumps of peonies. It is also the time of the year when you >>**

place last minute orders for peonies and when peonies will be arriving from mail order suppliers and growers. It is really exciting to get these gems into the ground and the anticipation of spring growth and bloom is exhilarating. Late fall, after peony foliage has been killed by frost, is also the time to begin cleaning up peonies.

This fall we will not be having a fall sale. There is still time for you to contact a grower to place an order. There are so many nice newer cultivars on the market.

This fall we have a program planned for you with Scott Reath as our speaker. Scott is the owner of Reath's Nursery in the Upper Peninsula in Vulcan, Michigan. His nursery is an internationally renowned mail order nursery specializing in the finest varieties of peonies, both tree and herbaceous and has hybridized many exceptional new peony varieties. His nursery is on the web at <http://www.reathsnursery.com>.

Note the change of location for our program. It will be at the Discovery Center at 4750 Troost Avenue, Kansas City, Missouri. That is just on the east end of the plaza.

Also, later that evening we will enjoy a potluck meal and auction. This meal will begin at 6 pm. The location is at Joe and Claudia Schroer, 713 White Oak Lane, Gladstone, Mo. The Auction will be later that evening after the meal. We already have several nice action items that I know you will want. These include very special herbaceous peonies, tree peonies and intersectional peonies for you to bid on. See instructions and a map on page 5 about the potluck meal and auction.

See you at our fall events.

Happy Gardening,  
Leon Pesnell

## PEONIES IN BOOKS

The Heartland Peony Society has been very "pro" peony books since its very first meeting when we offered the, then new, 'Peonies' by Al Rogers. Since then we have co-published 'The Genus Paeonia' with Timber Press. This fall we will have at least 2 and we hope as many as 4 new books we know you'll want to add to your reading list.

'Peonies' by Pamela McGeorge. Firefly Books, \$24.95 (Member's Discount Available). This is a gorgeously produced introduction to peonies by a noted garden writer with numerous full color photos by her husband Russell McGeorge. There are chapters on herbaceous and tree peonies as well as species and intersectional types. Topics include propagation, cultivation and diseases. In short, a bit about a lot of essential topics. The book has a lot to offer in a beautiful package at a reasonable price. Soft bound.

'The Book of Mediterranean Peonies' by G. L. Osti, U. Allemandi and Company \$45 (Member's Discount Available) Originally published in Italian, this new edition consists of the entire original text with a full English translation. The author's previous book (on tree peonies) was published 6 years ago and now sells in the used book market for almost a thousand dollars! This is a matching book and it covers the wild herbaceous species from the heart of Europe. Beautiful color illustrations and photos make this a collector's item and a good read. Limited stocks. Hard bound.

'Chinese Tree Peonies' Edited by Li JiaJue, Chinese Forestry Publishing House. This volume concentrates on tree peonies from SW, NW and Yangtze areas of China. The former volume in this series was based on central plains varieties. The book is completely in English, 205 pages and has full color throughout.

'The Book of Tree Peonies' by Gian Lupo Osti, This book, was published in 1997 and has 135 photos of peonies that were taken in China. This is a beautiful book that is no longer available at bookstores. We have a few copies available for purchase.

## Potluck Meal

We are providing the meat, tableware and beverages. Please bring a dish to share as follows, if your last name begins with...

- A through D – Dessert
- E through L – Salad
- M through Q – Side Dish
- R through Z – Casseroles

## Business Meeting

There will be a brief business meeting just prior to the auction. The meeting will be very brief and to the point.

## Auction

We will have very special herbaceous peonies, tree peonies and intersectional peonies for you to bid on. Many of these items are not available at any price. Some are new introductions that have never been seen by the general public.

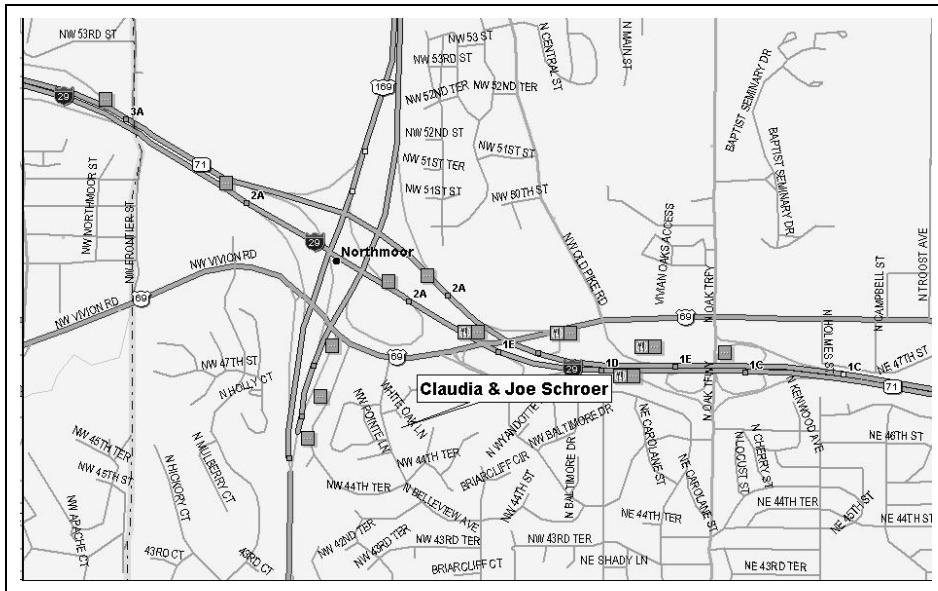
Directions to this event at the Schroer's

From I-29 or Highway 169 take the Vivion Road Exit;

From Vivion Road turn South onto North Belleview Avenue;

Turn Left (1 block) at White Oak Lane;

Turn Right immediately after passing the Claymont Estates entrance.



## Fall is "Time to Dig" by James W. Waddick

Peonies are glorious spring flowers. I'd even say they are the "glory of the spring garden" surpassing iris and roses, at least in my garden. They provide a show of color for six and more weeks.

Just don't think about digging, dividing and moving them until fall. Spring is the enjoyment season, but Fall is the work season. Fall is the best time to do it all with your plants. As the weather cools off and days shorten, peonies start to 'run down'. The foliage gets tattered, sunburned and generally ratty. No wonder some people get tempted to mow them down early (not a good idea).

Here in Kansas City some peonies get to look poorly by August and September. In fact they are at the stage in their annual cycle when they have converted their energy from the foliage and moved it back to roots for winter storage. They are slowing down and starting a dormant period before the coldest winter weather hits. Now is the time to consider all these chores: digging, dividing, moving, and this applies to all peonies- Herbaceous, Tree and Intersectional, named varieties, old granny plants and species. Let's talk about herbaceous peonies here. The best time to dig is after the foliage has dropped and there are still a few weeks before hard killing frosts. This doesn't always happen here in the Kansas City Metro area so the arbitrary dates of Mid-August to Mid-October are generally good - almost 2 months to get to work. Herbaceous (including intersectional) and tree peonies can be dug at this time, but I'll concentrate on the far more numerous herbaceous or 'garden' peonies.

A day or two before digging, water the plants lightly to fully moisten the soil, but don't get it too muddy. Then cut the stems to about 4-6 inches. Remove all cut stems and

foliage and either burn them or throw them away. Do not compost them as they may harbor fungal disease. When you go to dig the plants the soil should be loose and the cut stems are the perfect length as a 'handle'. Some people prefer to have the soil dry so it crumbles away, but in our hard clay soils, it is like digging in concrete, here. Dig the entire plant, starting about 10 inches to a foot wider than the stems and dig straight down, then angle in. You should be able to dig under the whole plant and have it emerge as a single clump of roots and stems. At this time, the red to pink 'eyes' or 'buds will be visible at the base of each stem.

These form the genesis of next year's growth and bloom. Although care is good, these dormant roots, crowns and stems are pretty sturdy. There are not likely to snap off. Shake, scrape and do what is needed to clean most of the soil from the roots without damaging them. Hose off the rest of the soil. You need to see exactly what you have. In older plants the "crown" at the base of the stems may be cracked, black and full of holes. Now is the time to divide your plant. Even if all you really want to do is move the plant, it is better to replant a smaller division. Any peony over five years in the ground will benefit from dividing.

Don't be discouraged by the tangle of roots you have when you have cleaned the roots. Dividing takes some practice, but fear not. You will end up with a third to half or more of unusable root pieces and scraps as leftovers. That's OK. Very old plants will have a lot of blackened, rotted and disintegrating crown parts. Discard anything that doesn't look healthy. When you cut into roots or crown the interior should be pale and creamy in color. Anything too off-white, tan or black should be tossed.

Using a sharp knife, spade or even hatchet, separate the crown into pieces with each containing one to no more than four stems, two to six buds and two or three large roots, but you can be flexible. Cut the stems down to >>

an inch or two and the large roots to 6 to 8 inches long. An older plant may produce a few to dozens of new plants. And don't worry if after trimming, if some of the divisions are only one bud on a single root. Even those will grow. Properly planted and cared for these will begin to bloom in a year or two and produce a full sized plant in 3 to 4 years. Do not simply replant a large older peony as it will be set back and slow to grow well again. Smaller divisions are prompted to make many new healthy roots, crown and shoots.

Assuming your plants are well labeled to begin with and that you didn't lose the name tag (Ahem!) make sure that each piece has a tag or label and correct identification. If you have lost the tag, at least write down some basic information such as color and form of flower such as 'Single Red' or Large Pink Double". Just try not to pass along a totally 'no name' peony.

Prepare a new planting site and plant each new division at the proper depth (no more than 2 inches to the top of the crown) and in full or nearly full sun. In the cooler fall weather this is easy to do, after you get over the procrastination of digging the plants. Digging and dividing will result in more and healthier plants, and in spring you'll be glad you got around to these basic chores.

If for any reason you can't get those newly dug and divided plants into the ground right away, you can wrap them in damp newspaper and place in an open loose plastic bag in a cool shaded spot for a week or two. Check to make sure they have not dried out or rotted. You can also pack them in milled or coarse sphagnum or peat moss and store them or wrap them in a closed plastic bag and mail them to friends.

Good luck and enjoy all the new plants, especially those you have shared with friends. <>

Membership form

To renew your membership or to join the *Heartland Peony Society*, fill in the information below and submit with the appropriate membership dues to:

Joe Schroer  
713 White Oak Lane  
Gladstone, MO 64116-4607

USA Household Membership(\$5.00/Yr)  
Outside USA(\$15.00/Yr)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/St./Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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in using the membership form

If you would like to volunteer to help the Heartland Peony Society in any way indicate below:

- ☐ Membership Committee
- ☐ Programs & Events Committee
- ☐ Web-site Development Committee
- ☐ Sales & Merchandising Committee
- ☐ Publications Committee
- ☐ I am interested in writing an article on peonies that I grow.

Comments:

## **The Heartland Peony Society**

**2007 American Peony Society Convention**

**May 18, 19, & 20, 2007**

**Hilton Kansas City Airport Hotel, Kansas City, Missouri**

The Heartland Peony Society will be hosting the American Peony Society Convention for 2007. This is the first time the APS convention has been held in the Kansas City area. Along with the APS convention we will be having programs covering new developments in peonies, tours of local gardens. You should mark your calendar now so you can be a part of this event. We plan to have some internationally known speakers, hybridizers, and growers; this is a rare opportunity to hear these people, to listen to their first hand knowledge on the subject, and meet the members of the American Peony Society Board of Directors. This convention will also include an auction of prize plants that will be similar to our fall auction and a premier bus tour to an area peony grower. There will be a flower display, which without fail, will show some of the newest cutting-edge peonies from peony producers all over the nation. We expect to also have international growers from outside the United States.

If you would like to volunteer to help with the 2007 APS convention please contact Leon Pesnell at LPESNELL@KC.NET.

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### **Membership Renewal**

The mailing label on this newsletter has the year that you have paid through following your name. If the label has a year prior to 2006 your membership is not current. To reinstate membership in good standing, you must pay dues for 2006. Your membership must be paid to be eligible for attend many of our society events.

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## *Heartland Peony Society*

### **Current Board of Directors**

<b>Leon Pesnell</b>	<b>President</b>
<b>Alana Holste</b>	<b>Vice President</b>
<b>Sasha Paulsen</b>	<b>Secretary</b>
<b>Joe Schroer</b>	<b>Treasurer/Membership</b>
<b>Talis Bergmanis</b>	<b>Inventory</b>
<b>Bruce Deering</b>	
<b>Paul Crosby</b>	
<b>Lyn Holiday</b>	
<b>Judy Jackson</b>	
<b>Pat McBee</b>	
<b>Mike Moore</b>	
<b>Roxanne Morse</b>	
<b>Louanna Simmons</b>	