

# *The Heartland Peony Society*

*Paeonia tenuifolia*



Photo by Merle Palmiter

**2006 Calendar of events**

**Linda Hall Library  
Tree Peony Garden Tour  
Saturday April 22, 2006**

**Grafting Workshop  
August 12, 2006**

**Potluck & Auction  
October 6, 2006**

**Fall Program  
October 7, 2006**

**Spring 2006 Newsletter**

# Presidents Message

By Leon Pesnell

We here in the Midwest have enjoyed one of the mildest winters on record. Until recently it has also been one of the driest winters. The warm weather has caused our peonies to emerge early and that can make them more vulnerable to an untimely late freeze. As I write this, the forecast calls for nighttime chilling to 22° F through the next few days. Even though some of my herbaceous peonies are up a foot tall I know them to be resilient plants and I believe they will weather this cold temperature easily. The morning following the cold the plants can hang their heads as though they are in shame but they will rebound proudly by the end of the day. The tree peonies are also much advanced for this early in the season. Even in normal years, I have some trouble with Chinese tree peonies getting ahead of the season. More than a few years I have experienced the buds failing to properly open due to excessive cold that has arrived after the buds have grown. I take a wait and see attitude here and hope for the best outcome. The Japanese tree peonies are a bit behind in bud growth and will fare better than the earlier Chinese cultivars. The Lutea hybrid tree peonies seem to be smarter and are keeping their buds tight, waiting for the “real spring” to arrive.

Our fall events that were held the first weekend of October were grandly successful. The Friday night event with the potluck meal and auction was the very exciting. We had wonderful food, great conversation, and some vicious bidding on the prize plants that were offered. Earlier in the evening the patio sale of Russian cultivars went well also. The Saturday program with Lindsay D'Aoust as speaker was very well received. Lindsay's slide presentation and talk covered information about stretching the peony blooms season by including peony cultivars that bloom at various parts of the peony bloom season. The plant sale that followed was larger than any we have had in the past and was a great success. We also donated many plants to area public gardens. We consider this to be fulfilling a part of our >>

stated goal.

Something new for us this year is a feature that has appeared on our website at <http://www.peonies.org>. The feature is called "Peony Portraits". We plan to have a number of pages in this area that will highlight specific cultivars, groups, and species. We have our first portrait on the website and I invite you to take a look at it. The first Peony Portrait covers *Paeonia tenuifolia*, the fern-leaf peony and its related cultivars. You might note the photo of the single fern-leaf peony on the front of this newsletter. You can access peony portraits from the home page of <http://www.peonies.org>.

Just to let you know what lies ahead for this year, our society will be leading tours of the Linda Hall Library tree peony garden on April 19, 22, 23, & 25. Saturday April 22 will be a special time for HPS members to enjoy the gardens. We will be serving donuts and drinks so bring your sweet tooth and a desire to view beautiful tree peonies.

On August 12<sup>th</sup> we will host a tree peony grafting workshop at the Loose Park garden center. This is a great opportunity to learn more about propagating your tree peonies. You will leave the workshop with grafts that are worth far more than the mere cost of the admittance to the workshop. The grafts, which I completed last fall, are emerging now. This always is exciting for me to see the new plants that are created simply by using root and scion and joining them together. I am certain that anyone can master the simple task of grafting tree peonies.

Our fall program will be on October 6 & 7. We now have our peony sale on an every other year basis and therefore we do not plan to have the plant sale this fall following the program. The fall events are still being planned so watch your fall newsletter for information you will need.

Happy Gardening,  
Leon Pesnell

**HPS Spring Tour**  
**Linda Hall Library Tree Peony Garden**  
**Saturday, April 22, 2006**  
**9:30 am to Noon**

The Linda Hall Library has a collection of over 75 mature tree peonies. We will be touring this large display of tree peonies on April 22<sup>nd</sup> from 9:30 am until noon. We will have donuts and drinks available for you to munch on while you browse through the garden. The garden is open to the public during each day but this specific time is for us as a group to spend time together viewing tree peonies and visiting about our own gardens. There will be other specific times that volunteers from our society will be giving tours of the garden. The additional times are:

Wednesday April 19<sup>th</sup> 4pm - 6pm  
Saturday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> Noon - 4pm  
Sunday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> Noon - 4pm  
Tuesday April 25<sup>th</sup> 4pm - 6pm

So plan now to attend our spring tour at the Linda Hall Library.

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## The Chinese

Being perfect artists and ingenuous poets, the Chinese have piously preserved the love and holy cult of flowers; one of the very rare and most ancient traditions which has survived their decadence. And since flowers had to be distinguished from each other, they have attributed graceful analogies to them, dreamy images, pure and passionate names which perpetuate and harmonize in our minds the sensations of gentle charm and violent intoxication with which they inspire us. So it is that certain peonies, their favorite flower, are saluted by the Chinese, according to their form or color, by these delicious names, each an entire poem and an entire novel: The Young Girl Who Offers Her Breasts, or: The Water That Sleeps Beneath the Moon, or: The Sunlight in the Forest, or: The First Desire of the Reclining Virgin, or: My Gown Is No Longer All White Because in Tearing It the Son of Heaven Left a Little Rosy Stain; or, even better, this one: I Possessed My Lover in the Garden.

Octave Mirbeau, *The Torture Garden*, (1899)

## **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 a symposium covering new developments in peonies. The symposium will cover 3 time periods and will include information on herbaceous peonies, tree peonies, and intersection peonies. You should mark your calendar now so you can be a part of this event. We plan to have some internationally known speakers; this is a rare opportunity to hear these people and to listen to their first hand knowledge on the subject. 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.

If you would like to volunteer to help with the 2007 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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### **HPS donations**

Each year the Heartland Peony Society donates plants to area public gardens. This past fall The Heartland Peony Society donated peony plants to the following locations.

**Johnson County Community College**

**Linda Hall Library**

**The Scott Arboretum of Swarthmore College**

**Rolling Hills Presbyterian Church**

**Kansas State Extension Center**

# Getting a Jump on Spring

by James W. Waddick

Peonies are a part of Memorial Day and Mother's Day since they seem to produce peak bloom between the middle and end of May here in the Kansas City Metro area. They are evidence that spring has arrived in full force and their exuberant explosion from the earth to bloom happens in a matter of days... or so it seems.

But what if you could get this breath of spring a month earlier? Did you know there are plenty of peonies that come up and bloom a month earlier and continue through to "spring"? Read on.

In my north Kansas City garden I have regular bloom from the earliest peonies starting with such old reliable varieties such as 'Early Scout' and 'Smouthii'. Both of these have the fine cut-leaf foliage inherited from the fern-leaf peony parent (*Paeonia tenuifolia*) and with similar single deep red flowers. These come up just as the frost is fading away, but grow quickly to around 20 inches in height. Even as they emerge from the ground the fat buds are clearly seen just forming at ground level. The foliage is deep red to start, but takes on more green as the stems extend. With more warmth the foliage expands into a display as delicate as a cut-leaf Japanese maple. The flowers are richest red with deep burgundy shades too. Each flower has a prominent yellow center. They are totally trouble free for me.

There are other related early blooming hybrids that are recommended for our area. 'Laddie' is slightly smaller and 'Merry Mayshine' slightly taller. Another favorite of mine is 'Little Red Gem' at only around one foot, with but double

flowers and finer foliage. This is a fairly recent hybrid from David Reath, but is widely available. It needs a place in any perennial garden bed or border, near the front. The fine foliage last well into summer and it is very garden worthy.

Even more fern-leaf hybrids show a range of form and color. Another excellent plant is ‘Nosegay’ with single flowers of a delicate light pink. Some people think it is too ‘fleshy’ a pink and not bright enough, but this is definitely in the eye of the beholder. If you scan the peony catalogs (and don’t we all do this?) you’ll find a variety of other peonies named ‘Early’ this or that. It probably means they are early.

You can also check the peony descriptions and find that bloom season is given usually in terms of “E”, “M” or “L” meaning Early, Midseason or Late. You’ll also see “VE” meaning “Very Early” and this is the code to look for to add on to the front of the bloom season.

Some of the species are very early too and among the best is *Paeonia mlokosewitschii* familiarly called ‘Molly the Witch’ for the tongue-tied. Its fat buds start popping up in late February to March and expand to bloom here by mid-April. The bold foliage is handsome all season long and the flowers can show a range of colors. The ‘typical’ color is a yellow shade from palest, creamy primrose to a brighter canary yellow, but pink shades are found too. A friend in New York State, John Finkle, grows both and since they hybridize easily on their own, intermediates appear as self-sown seedlings. These ‘weedlings’ show colors from yellow to pink, apricot and peach some with a deeper pink picotee edge. He calls them ‘Molly Mutts’ and enjoys their appearance all around the yard.

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**Of course the Queen of Flowers can be very early too. I am speaking of tree peonies. Like herbaceous peonies, these are often listed by bloom season. Check out the catalogs for those that bloom ‘Early’ or “Very Early’. Here the earliest are the Chinese varieties in general especially those from *P. suffruticosa* background also called ‘Central Plains’ or ‘Classic’ cultivars. I like the large white single P. ‘Fen Dan Bai’ (Phoenix White). The slightly fuller ‘Da Jin Fen’ is a pale pink that can be counted on in April, too. and some of the best Japanese varieties are early such as ‘Yachiotsubaki’ (pink), Hana Kiso (Rose-pink) and ‘Renkaku’ (White).**

**Not all tree peonies are this early and not all early peonies will be early in every situation. Plants in cooler parts of the garden will emerge and bloom slower than plants exposed to the earliest warm rays of the spring sun. By selecting peonies, either species, herbaceous or trees, marked ‘Early’ or ‘Very Early’ and planting them where they will be fully exposed to the first warm weather and spring rains, you can easily have blooming peonies in the middle of April a full month before the mid to late May peak. Some of the HPS members attended our public program last fall by Lindsay D’Aoust on “Seven Weeks of Bloom”. Isn’t it time you enjoyed the longer season? <>**

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**In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt.**

**Margaret Atwood**



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: \_\_\_\_\_

**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:

This page is left blank for your convenience  
in using the membership form

# The Heartland Peony Society Website

<http://www.peonies.org>

We are on the web at <http://www.peonies.org> Our website is very active with many people taking advantage of the resources that we have posted on the web.

We have a new feature on the website. Peony Portraits are pages that detail the characteristics of various peonies. Some portraits will explore the various aspects of a peony species while others will detail the characteristics of a specific cultivar. Our first portrait is on *Paonia tenuifolia*, the fern-leaf peony and was written by Irmtraud Rieck. From the main page of the website click on "Peony Portraits". You can submit your own Peony Portrait of your favorite peony to Leon Pesnell.

The feature on our website that gets the most use is the peony photo gallery which has six hundred cultivars represented with more than one thousand photographs. New photos have been recently added. On the main page of the website click on "Gallery"

If you have photos that you would be willing to have placed in the Heartland website gallery contact Leon Pesnell, 1104 East 2000 Road, Eudora, Kansas 66025, or phone at 785-542-3316, or by email at [LPESNELL@KC.NET](mailto:LPESNELL@KC.NET)

You can contribute your own descriptions of your favorite peonies. Your description will help to make the database even more complete and functional. You can submit your descriptions directly to the website or send them to Leon Pesnell.

## Peony Clipboard looking for its owner

After last year's Fall Peony Day someone left a clipboard with a lot of typed information listing peony cultivars and some penciled notes – the top page says PEONY LIST 2005. The only reference to its possible owner is that it is labeled PINK HOUSE GARDENS. If you think this clipboard is looking for you then please call Claudia Schroer at 816 459-9386

# *Heartland Peony Society*

## **2006 Board of Directors**

<b>Leon Pesnell</b>	<b>President</b>
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