

The Heartland Peony Society

Newsletter
Fall 2010



A sky-blue peony would certainly be significant, be wildly popular and bring plant envy to your garden, but it doesn't exist, yet. What makes any one peony more significant than another? Do you grow any peonies with special significance to you?

See inside.

Friday OCT 8

Saturday OCT 9

Member's Pot-Luck Dinner Auction

Public Program by Dr. David Michener on
the University of Michigan Peony Garden

Details inside

Visit HPS on the web at www.peonies.org

President's Message

by Talis Bergmanis

The Heartland Peony Society's Spring Event was a shopping trip to Powell Gardens and three central Missouri nurseries.

On Saturday May 1, shortly after 8 a.m., our bus with 46 participants left Rolling Hills Presbyterian Church. Our first stop was the Powell Gardens plant sale. We had rain at Powell but adequate shelter kept us pretty dry.

From Powell, we drove through showers into sunshine for the visits to Longfellow's and Missouri Wildflowers. Longfellow's Garden Center, about half an hour west of Jefferson City, had set up tables and chairs in one of their hoop houses for our lunch. We enjoyed our Chacko's box lunches among the plants. Longfellow's also extended us a 10% discount on our purchases.

Next stop was Missouri Wildflowers Nursery, just south of Jefferson City. They often participate at area garden sales and Kansas City's Public Market, but there's nothing like browsing through their extensive sales and display beds. After visiting Missouri Wildflowers, we met rain again at Vintage Hill Farm near Franklin. Fortunately, most of their plants were inside greenhouses so we remained relatively dry.

People enjoyed the variety of the four locations. Vintage Hill drew the most positive comments. The tropical selection at Vintage Hill was particularly impressive. Owner Jeff Oberhaus said tropical plants were a particular interest of his and that he regularly gets customers from Kansas City and St. Louis.

The luggage area of the bus was totally packed with plants on our return to Rolling Hills. There was some confusion as people unloaded their numerous boxes. For future trips, we've come up with a slightly different procedure to guard against misplaced or lost purchases.

2010 Fall Event

Potluck Dinner

Our 2010 Potluck dinner, meeting and auction will be held Friday, October 8th at the Rolling Hills Presbyterian Church at 9300 Nall Avenue. Doors will open at 6:30 PM and we will begin eating at 7:00 PM. Please note alcohol will not be permitted.

Meat and beverages will be provided by the club. Please bring a salad, side dish or dessert according to the following schedule. No RSVP is necessary.

<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Type of Dish</u>
A-K	Desserts
L-R	Salads
S-Z	Side Dish

After socializing and dinner, there will be a brief club meeting. Then comes the always entertaining club auction. Jim and his friends always manage to find new, rare, and interesting plants for auction. We will need to start cleaning up about 9:30 PM in order to vacate the building by 10:00 PM.



Spring Trip 2011 to MOBOT

Last spring when we were planning the trip to the Missouri nurseries, a suggestion was made to take a trip to the Missouri Botanical Gardens (MOBOT) in St. Louis. They have numerous tree and herbaceous peonies as well as a variety of other plants.

Since St. Louis is at least a 4 hour trip each way and since there is so much to see at MOBOT, it was decided that it was not feasible to plan this as a one-day trip. This would be a two day trip with an overnight stay. Peonies are planted around the gardens with many in the famous Japanese Garden area. We also plan to shop at a few area St. Louis Nurseries on this trip.

Before we plan such a trip, we need your input to determine if there is sufficient interest to proceed. At this point, cost estimates are rough and include the bus ride, double occupancy hotel room, admission to MOBOT and meals. At this point we estimate the cost to be about \$180-\$200 per person, but this is subject to change as we incorporate traveler's suggestions.

We'd have plenty of room to bring home special plant purchases, too. If you would be interested in a two day overnight trip to MOBOT in St. Louis, please contact 0000 0000000 at 000000000000 or 000-000-0000. This contact would not be a binding commitment, but would merely allow us to determine the level of interest. What would you like to see and do in St. Louis?



2010 Fall Event

Lecture

Our 2010 lecture will be held Saturday, October 9th at the Rolling Hills Presbyterian Church at 9300 Nall. Our speaker will be David C. Michener. He will speak on the restoration of the University of Michigan Peony garden as an international conservation collection.

Dr. Michener has been an Associate Curator at the University of Michigan's Matthaei Botanical Garden and Nichols Arboretum (MBGNA) since 1990.



Dr. David C. Michener

During the 1920's, Dr. Upjohn, founder of Upjohn pharmaceuticals gave MBGNA about 800 herbaceous peonies from his personal collection. These plantings were largely ignored over the next 60-70 years. Now these plantings are being recognized as a major international reference collection of 19th and early 20th century herbaceous cultivars.

Dr. Michener will speak to this garden's history, restoration, validation of plant identification, and future plans. I hope you can join us for this interesting lecture. Perhaps we all can gather ideas on how to maintain our gardens of future heirlooms.

Doors open at Rolling Hills Presbyterian Church at 9:00 AM. The lecture starts at 9:30 AM.

SIGNIFICANT PEONIES

by James W. Waddick

Every gardener has a peony in the landscape that evokes some special memory or response. Perhaps the color, the scent or recollection of the purchase, gift or person associated with that plant. You might have a gorgeous specimen in just the right place. When that certain special peony blooms, it makes a significant 'statement' to you, your garden and to all who see it.

Significance can mean many things to many people and all at the same time. To the gardener or hybridizer, the same peony can be significant for totally different reasons. Historically significant peonies abound, but what exactly does that mean? Let's review some significant peonies.

From an historic perspective, we have to mention the first peonies to be brought into cultivation. The Greeks referred to their native peonies at least 800 to 1,000 years BC, but the Chinese recorded their peonies several thousand years BC. The Greeks have been growing the wild *Paeonia mascula* in their gardens for medicinal use for a very long time. Significantly the Greek name for their peony is the base for the scientific name of the genus *Paeonia*.

Significantly different, the Chinese may have grown the wild tree peony, *P. rockii* strictly for ornament. Archeological evidence suggests some very sophisticated cultivation, selection and herbal developments well before Greek studies began.

Although there is no official designation as to what constitutes an 'Historic Peony', surely some of the earliest and most popular peonies in gardens today would fit this title. Peony 'Edulis Superba' a French hybrid from 1824 and still widely grown is surely historically significant. P. 'Mons. Jules Elie' from 1888 and 'Sarah Bernhardt' from 1906 although relative newcomers are

surely historic and significant. They are all very widely grown, readily available and favorites of thousands for garden beauty and the cut flower trade.

Among tree peonies, the earliest French yellow flowered hybrids 'L'Esperance' (1909), 'Souvenir de Maxime Cornu' (1919) and 'Chromatella' (1920) were significant in that they hybridized the newly discovered yellow-flowered *P. lutea* into existing Japanese and Chinese tree peonies. These first hybrids are still available today, but greatly exceeded by modern 'Lutea Hybrids'.

Another significant hybridizing occasion was the development of yellow-flowered herbaceous peonies. Although the Eastern European *P. mlokosewitschii* was well known, it proved difficult to expand this pale yellow color into other garden peonies. Although this work continues to this day excellent introductions such as 'Sunny Boy' and especially 'Lemon Chiffon', the significant breakthrough came from a different direction.

The first hybrids between herbaceous peonies and yellow-flowered tree peonies resulted in the long sought bright yellow-flowered herbaceous peonies known as Intersectional or Itoh Hybrids after their Japanese originator. These were significant for many reasons. They first bloomed in the 1950s and at almost 60 years of age, they must be historically, genetically, horticulturally and commercially significant all at once.

Significance, however, may be a passing fancy. At one time the American Peony Society rated peonies and gave a numerical value to help people select the 'best'. The peony 'Kelway's Glorious' received the highest rating of any peony. Surely it was a 'significant' rating, but the actual peony has gone out of fashion and the rating system deleted. It may have proven that not even the best peony can perform well in all gardens.

You'd think that a peony that received the highest rating from the American Peony Society, their Gold Medal', might hold some of this significance for long time. After all, we have seen that almost 200 year old peonies still retain favor in gardens. Yet a number of Gold Medal peonies are little seen or known in gardens today. When did you extol the virtues of 'Harry Little' (GM 1934), 'Doris Cooper' (GM 1949), 'Nick Shaylor' (GM 1972) 'Bu-Te' (GM 1975), or 'Dolorodell' (GM 1984) ? These may all still be in commerce and many are still in gardens, but they are found lacking in significant ways compared to more modern cultivars and even older stand-bys that have other unique characters. These latter varieties are surely 'new' in the peony world, while the earlier names might be considered of more 'historic' interest. This shows how significance can change due to changes in standards, public interest or other factors.

So what do you make of the 2004 Gold Medal for a peony introduced way back in 1946 ! ('Do Tell). Sounds historic to me! Surely the Medal and the significance are in the mind of selectors. Or maybe there simply are not enough significant peonies to warrant an award every year.

The thesaurus has many meanings for 'significant': great importance, noteworthy, historic, weighty, momentous, special meaning, and rare among many. I think we have seen that significance can vary from year to year, from country to country and mostly from person to person.

All this weighty significance mean little to the average gardener who may place special significance on a plant given to them years ago as a small piece of root by a now departed friend or relative. This little nub has grown into a healthy and beautiful specimen that never fails to remind the gardener of Uncle Steve or Aunt Helen at bloom season, at least. The significance goes way beyond rarity and history, but strikes at the heart of things. Maybe the most significant peony is one you have on your shopping list for next year.

NOIDS in the Garden

By Anon

Most peony growers and home gardeners that grow peonies have NOIDS. Although it sounds like an affliction, NOIDS are merely unidentified plants (No IDs).

NOIDS arise in one of two ways. The first and more common way is for a registered plant to “lose” its identity. The second way is for established plants to set seed with the volunteer seedlings being retained and vegetatively propagated.

Many gardeners are not meticulous record keepers--they merely enjoy pretty plants in the garden. The ID tag may not be retained, become illegible, or be removed by animals or children. If plants are divided, moved, or the property sold, the ID information may not remain with the plant. It is easy to see how over the course of generations, many once registered varieties lose their ID and are now propagated as “red”, “pink”, or “white”.

A century ago, when peonies were more commonly grown for cut flowers, many local growers supplied regional demands. These growers developed their own varieties. The official American Peony Society Registration description of these plants was often minimal (i.e. midseason pink Japanese). The lack of distinguishing characteristics in the official description and the similarity of plants developed by regional growers makes it difficult to recover the name of a peony once it is lost.

The loss of their original name and their pedigree makes these old plants no less beautiful. Indeed, if they were not so beautiful, they would not have endured all these years. If you have a “NOID” in your garden, enjoy it. Cut it for flowers and share it with your friends. Keep a spot in your garden for these old-timers who have provided joy for so many people for so many years.

Membership Form

Is your membership Current?

Please check your mailing label. The year displayed after your name indicates the calendar year through which your membership is paid. For example “2010” indicates a membership paid through Dec. 31st 2010.

A renewal would be necessary to participate in 2011 activities.

To join or renew membership in the society, complete this form, attach the appropriate payment (cash, money order, or check payable to HPS in US funds), and mail to:

Mike Moore
2001 E. Washington
Paola, KS 66071

USA Membership (\$5.00)/year

Canada or Outside USA (\$15.00)/year

HPS will not send an automatic membership renewal when your membership expires. To avoid lapses, it is encouraged that you prepay your membership for several years in advance.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Funds enclosed are for a multi-year membership

Your name will be included in our membership roster which is periodically distributed to the membership. On occasion, we may make our membership roster available to other garden or horticultural-related organizations. If you do not want your name distributed outside HPS, please check here: Do not distribute my name outside of HPS

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