

THE PEONY NEWSLETTER
For peony seed sowers and friends.

Volume 2, No. 3

September 1971

REQUIRED READING — None

SUGGESTED READING -

1. The Peonies by John C. Wister , \$3.50 from the American Peony Society. This book is worth its weight in rare peony seeds.
2. The Bulletins of the American Peony Society.
3. Srb, Owen and Edgar — Advanced reading on genetics (I have never read this one).

The PEONY NEWSLETTER is authorized by the American Peony's First Lady — Our Miss Saunders.

Our leader and teacher in hybridizing has been, and will continue to be, Roy Pehrson.

Editors are Chris and Lois Laning, 553 West F Avenue, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 49007. Suggested yearly contribution is \$2.00 to cover expenses of printing and mailing.

Our thanks to you, Mr. and Mrs. Don Kozak. The newsletters you sent out this past year have been read and re-read. You have done a good job — appreciated by many, I'm sure. Now don't drop out of sight! Write often!

To Our Readers we suggest: Write when you have something interesting, and consider yourself as part of our team — always!

Outlines are easy to follow and not difficult to understand. Here is an outline; one we will use this coming year.

PEONY OUTLINE

I. Blooming Season

- A. Earlier flowering
- B. Later flowering
- C. Re-bloomers
- D. Ever-bloomers

II. Color Range

- A. New Colors
 1. Yellow
 2. Purple
 3. Blue
 4. Green
- B. Bi-colors as in Primevere and Picotee, also Japanese types
- C. Flares — as in some of Saunders' hybrids, also in some tree peonies.
- D. Strains based on Mr. Cooper's investigation. (This will be further developed in next newsletter).

III. Flower size, style, and texture

- A. Very small (tiny) doubles, semi-double and singles. Also Japs, anemones, etc.
- B. Medium size blooms with forms same as above.
- C. Large and gigantic show blooms in all the above forms
- D. Many blooms per stem.

IV. The Plant (or bush)

- A. Height: as dwarf, short, medium height, tall, and very tall,
- B. Foliage: as color of leaves, color of stems, types of leaf as with the “bloom” on the mlokos and some Saunders’ hybrids with crepe like leaves and crinkled, fern-like leaves as in *tenuifolia*.
- C. Disease-resistance and general thriftiness, along with stout stems.
- D. Hardiness
 - 1. Extending zones where these plants can be grown.
 - 2. Improve weak growers such as the exceedingly beautiful willmottiae, also mlokosewitschi and coriacea.

V. Tools for breeding

- A. Must have pollen producing ability - or
- B. Ovaries; for seed producing ability.
- C. Complete; seed and pollen production ability.
- D. Seeds to germinate easily and seedlings to bloom sooner (in three years or less).

VI. Developing uses for the peony

- A. Investigate various steps in successful potting and forcing.
- B. Arouse new interest in peony (interest the neighbours).
- C. Shows and displays and “Love the Peony Day.”
- D. Arrangements and arranging bouquets.

VII. OUR MOTTO — “You help me and I'll help you”.

My immediate goal is tiny blooms; also blooms with flares. What will you be trying for??

Helps: Gibberellins

Colchicine

Ether

Chloroform

Fruit sprays

If any of these are used, keep records of results and make your findings known!

Notes: This outline will be our guide in developing our hobby of hybridizing. Use it and when telling of your goals include by letters and numbers the list of your plans.

Example: My goal as I have listed in #VII can be told from outline as follows (III-A and II-C)

We may expand our outline if you feel this is needed.

POTANINI

Information from description folder and price list from Dr. David Reath:

P. POTANINI var. TALL YELLOW (F. C. Stern) has proven to be more winter hardy than *P. lutea* in this northern area. Here, *P. lutea* freezes back to the ground and grows as an herbaceous peony, while this relatively new species has buds above ground that winter well and continue growing the following spring.

Its flowers are a bright yellow color held well above the foliage — a characteristic differing from *lutea*.

This plant was raised by F. C. Stern from seed obtained from China after his treatise The Genus *Paeonia* was published. The flowers are identical in appearance to the illustration of PAEONIA POTANINI var. TROLLIOIDES. Like P. POTANINI, it increases rapidly by stolons. In correspondence received from Sir Frederick, this plant differs from the var. trollioides by taller growth.

This next season, I am hoping to make crosses on this new species with pollen of our better Japanese tree peony varieties. Pollen of '**Yaso-no-mine**', my favorite white semi-double Japanese tree peony, will be one tried.

I have raised three seedlings of P. POTANINI var. TALL YELLOW X SELF — these, of course, are similar to the imported Stern clone.

The advantages of this new species over P. LUTEA then are:

- A. Hardier plant,
- B. Flowers stand up well above foliage.
- C. Plant blooms more abundantly.

POTANINI - STOLONIFEROUS

A stolon is an underground shoot from which a new plant like the parent grows (similar to strawberry runners but underground). This would simplify the job of propagating hybrids if this special trait could be incorporated into future hybrid tree peonies and difficult to propagate herbaceous peonies. An example of its effects might result in *lutea* hybrids by divisions rather than by grafting. But is this stoloniferous trait dominant or recessive ??

From our Peony Society Bulletin, December, 1970, in an article: Peonies Observed at Kew Gardens, London, August 9, 1970. by Anthony J. DeBlasi; "*P. potanini* bloomed, also there was a hybrid *P. lutea* x *potanini* which bloomed."

Mr. Fred Cooper of Ottawa, Canada, in his article . "Peony Flower Pigments" in the June-September, 1970 issue of our Peony Bulletin shows that chalcones (clear yellow) pigment is found only in *potanini*. This yellow will mix with other colors, whereas *lutea* yellow color will not mix. More on this topic in the next newsletter.

The following taken from Bulletin of the Royal Horticulture Society of Great Britain.

NOTES FROM FELLOWS

Paeonia suffruticosa Rock's var.

This Paeony was received from a friend in Canada as quite a small plant in the autumn of 1936. It was planted out in half-shade under deciduous trees. The plant was raised from seed sent back from China by Dr. J.F. Rock to the Arnold Arboretum, U.S.A., and the seeds were distributed by them.

When the paeony flowered, it seemed to be exactly like the wild tree paeonies described by Reginald Farrer in his book, On the Eaves of the World, which he found on his expedition to Kansu in 1913, but unfortunately he never collected specimens or seed.

In answer to my enquiries, Dr. Rock wrote that the seed was collected by him from plants in the Yamen of the Cho-ni Lamasery, about 8,500 feet in S.W. Kansu. The Lamas told him that it came from the mountains of Kansu, known as "Min Shan", which Dr. Rock tells me are limestone. This plant, which is bone-hardy, has grown here in this chalky soil ever since 1936. It is now 8 feet tall in height and 12 feet in diameter, and this year 1959 it had over eighty flowers on it — a wonderful sight. - *F. C. Stern*

Ed. — Could this plant be stoloniferous? How does a plant spread to a diameter of 12 feet unless it be stoloniferous?

David Reath writes in his Peony Brochure:

P. SUFFRUTICOSA VAR. ROCK'S

Rock's peony has proven to be the hardiest of all tree peonies in our nursery. Perhaps the reason for this is the tendency it has to mature its growth very early in the season. Its branches harden early in July; buds likewise develop early and are very resistant to cold. It has a very attractive large white flower with maroon blotches at the base of the petals. It is perfectly hardy to 30 degrees below zero and is easy to cultivate. Attempts are being made to combine this hardy suffruticosa variety with P. POTANINI TALL YELLOW. A few two year old grafts will be sold this year at \$20.00 each.

Do you wonder why all the information on tree peonies? Well, we are interested in herbaceous ones and their development but it now seems possible to borrow desirable traits from the T.P.'s (as in the "Ito Crosses"), so don't reject it, a most welcome tool! Should you fall in love with it though, and want to add this line to your present hobby, you will have lost nothing.

Taking a side trip while at the Peony Show last June, I visited Roy Pehrson's peony garden. There I saw the great lacti x T. P. crosses, real (Ito type) crosses. I suppose seeing these plants was as exciting to the hybridizer as rocks from the moon to the scientist. And it seemed that there were a hundred plants there showing tree peony foliage on herbaceous plants. A Great Sight!!!

- *Chris*

Roy Pehrson, our instructor, writes of his 1971 successes:

Here are the interesting seedlings of this past season — out of about 700, mostly 5 year olds.

1. Supposedly '**Laura Dessert**' x Emodi-mloko, but has to be a pure lacti, I think. A small pink full double without stamens or carpels. Never saw such a small double before and it's real appealing. Could be very good though foliage seems ordinary.
2. The only true '**Laura Dessert**' x Emodi-mloko hybrid in the group. Foliage much divided, flower quite small purple-red. Fertile — very tiny pods with fine looking seeds. Might cross with the Windflowers?
3. A stray whose origin I don't know but it could be a Quad F3. A loosely formed double but has plenty of stamens with good pollen and carpels too. Color is creamy with very pronounced brilliant red flares at the base. Could be a good breeder, and I'm calling it "Super Double" in crosses. Got to call it something.
4. '**Sanctus**' x '**Silver Dawn**' F3, pink bomb. An extremely poor plant. Foliage already dried off .
5. '**Archangel**' x '**Nancy**'. Big pink jap of fine form. Leaves not dark, green like '**Archangel**', but stems arch over the same way. I don't like this part. Time will tell. Nice flower though and clearly different than the lacti japs. Seed fertile.
6. Quad F2 x '**Moonrise**' F2. Quite big and much more yellow than '**Moonrise**'. About as yellow as my plant of mloko. Foliage passable — different than, and possibly better than '**Moonrise**'. Fertile.

Mrs. Kostuck tells me she has 12 seeds of '**Laddie**' x Suffruticosa, already germinated and planted out.

EDITORIAL

By Chris Laning

Oh! that I might find a group of men so dedicated to the advancement of so enthralling a flower as the peony as to believe monetary remuneration mundane and renown repugnant in their quest for perfection.

The dream — a stoloniferous mutan x lactiflora cross by the way of potinini with lutea blood in its makeup with a bouquet on each stem.

And if along the way, remuneration (pay in the form of money for time and energy expended in the quest for the dream as ephemeral as the quest for the "Holy Grail") is forthcoming, let us (the dedicated) reroute such funds to a cause not dedicated to aggrandizement or enrichment in the financial sphere, namely the Peony Society.

Don't stop reading! A little overlap is good for something and the thoughts in it, I believe, have some worth. Lest happily you will deem this nonsense and relegate it to the waste basket, I'll have Lois explain what has been written so that even I can understand what I actually mean.

Develop plants that are practical and fun to grow and propagate. Not problem children.

Share — not sell for feeling of worth.

And don't forget the Peony Society.

Note: In our last newsletter, Roy Pehrson let us know of his misgivings with regard to the continuance and survival of the Bulletin. A letter from Dr. John Wister indicated he believes Roy's apprehensions are valid. So now my opinion:

Is the peony so ordinary that its popularity is maintained only by and because of its illustrious leaders? And when they fall into the inactive class, shall the peony pass into oblivion?

Was their inspiration the driving force, and their labors absolutely indispensable to further advancement?

Won't group dedication take the place of and fill the void left by loss of our peers? Is Dr. Wister's letter the swan song of the great men, or could we prove our teacher, Roy Pehrson, to be wrong in his pronouncements!

Maybe Roy is right, but let us not admit it!!

If you need herbaceous peony seeds and want them from the clone '**Minnie Shaylor**', let me know and I'll send you some. Also I have a good number of tree peony seeds. Ask and they shall be given!