PAEONIA

Volume 19, No.4 December 1988

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Kalamazoo, MI.

Suggested yearly contribution:
$2.50 in the U.S. and Canada
$4.00 in Europe and Australia.

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MAGAZINES

Al Rogers sent me Pacific Horticulture, Fall 1988, and Sunset, October 1988, having articles on peonies which are very impressive!

Pacific Horticulture shows beautiful pictures of some species peonies and the article is very informative with regard to their growing requirements. After studying the article, I have come to believe that there is no place on our earth where a complete collection of all species of peonies can be assembled — the requirements are too varied and specific! Some will take no freezing weather and others will demand a cold dormant season. This article has been reproduced and printed in the new issue of the APS Bulletin, December, 1988, entitled: King of Flowers, Queen of Herbs: The Peony.

Sunset magazine, October 1988, displays portions of Al Rogers' peony gardens. Mr. Al, Mrs. Al, and two little Als are artistically shown in this article along with some of their lovely peonies, other flowers, and their black dog.

This type of exposure, or presentation, is good for us and informs the general public of what new things are becoming available in the peony world.

The photography is excellent and the thoughts expressed are delightful. Very impressive is the photo of *P. mlokosewitschii* which turns on your "must have" desires but much to Al Rogers chagrin its propogation (for him) is difficult and finding a source offering them seems to be non-existent. To leave these beautiful yellow flowered gems in anguish, lonely to languish, doesn't speak well for us enthusiasts! Come on, let's get going on identifying the problem and solve it.

He located, maybe two acres, of old tree peonies that he bought and transported to his home gardens. Should be a beautiful sight when they become established and start to flourish!
Al, keep up the good work!!

- Chris

SEED DISTRIBUTION, continued

Add to the September, 1988, list of seed available the following:

1. Lactiflora seed from Stan Zubrowski, Canada
2. Tree Peony Seed (Suffruticosa) from Domoto of California
3. John Simkins sent seed and a note explaining them:
   > The T.P. seeds are a mixture of Gratwick seeds and my own. I meant to keep them separate but it didn't happen. The herbaceous hybrids are from (Mr.) Cousins' plants.
4. L. J. Dewey sent tree peony seed from named plants separated by known parentages.
5. Al Rogers sent in two shipments T.P. seeds and one bag of P. peregrina.

Our American Peony Society in September issue listed some of these contributors along with their listings.

- Chris

HYBRIDIZING WITH YELLOW FLOWERED MARSH MARIGOLD — FUTURE PROSPECT

Nancy Ann Halas

For some time now, it was felt that Mlokosowitschi was the pollen product of a yellow marsh marigold. The problem however was that we didn't know of any yellow marsh marigold, the ones only known were white.

However there is some interesting news for the die-hard hybridizer of Peonies. Endemic to the Borah Peak region of the Lost River Range in Idaho is the elusive yellow flowered variety of marsh marigold. It is reputed to be common on wet ground through the meadow in that region.

The scientific name of this flower is called- Caltha Leptosepala Sulfurea. However now that we know that a yellow flowered marsh marigold does exist noting also that it is a very cold weather variety and lives in the mountains, we seem to be no better off. How do you get the darn thing to civilization?

The prospect is that using pollen from the flower of the yellow marsh marigold onto the stigma of Peony albiflora will produce seeds for a yellow flowered peony similar to Peony species Mlokosowistschi with even the similar leaf structure.

It may be a long time before this is verified. However it does represent a challenge to the peony hybridizers; I'm sure that Saunders himself would have accepted the challenge.

Now that I have given you a good problem to work on, I'm contemplating how to obtain a yellow flowered marsh marigold. Like the yellow rose of Texas, it may be something to sing about.

Maybe we should set up a prize for the first successful hybridizer of this unique cross.

The acid test of pollen from the Marsh Marigold, to determine if it is related to Mlokosowitschi, is to pollenize Mlokosowitschi with this pollen and if it immediately sets seed, we should be fairly certain that they are related even after hundreds of years still.

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L. J. Dewey

Word has been received from Mrs. Jean Stanton, Delton, Michigan, that her brother, L. J. Dewey of Richmond, Virginia, passed away on November 17 after a six-month bout with cancer. I remember one of his final contributions was collection of tree peony seeds, the labeling and collecting of which must have taken a good share of his remaining energy. We express our sympathy to his family and friends.

PEONY MLOKOSOWITSCHII & DAURICA

Nancy Halas

The culture of Peony Mlokosowitschii has been something of an enigma to many growers who claim that it does for no apparent reason simply disappear. To explain this in part, I have to state that I do not cultivate that much about plants. My own philosophy is to use them in landscaping arrangements and get a clump growing so that the grass can be cut around it. It gives something of a bush effect and it does work out in time with patience.

Usually I never have that many Mloko plants and so I remember where I planted each of them and just what happened to them. I planted two in a very hot location and they bloomed the first year and then dried up about half way through summer and then that was the end of them. I didn't see them again for four years when they came up again in the same spot they were last planted. This time I planted them in a shadier location and where they will get at least a half days shade. But in four years the roots had not diminished in size but thrived underground and even prospered. However this year it was exceptionally dry and the leaves came up cupped searching for moisture. I feel convinced that the only reason the Mloko plants came up was the leaves more or less begging for water in the early dew of evening condensation. However when the soil is moist, the root does still get as much or as little sunshine as it prefers and will continue underground indefinitely until it is either choked out by some other root.

This is definitely a ranunculus or a frog in that it prefers to be good and cold if possible and to stay out of the hot sun by staying underground where it apparently does not die. Remember that the penetration of light is about three inches into the soil so that the roots continue to get screened sunshine more to their liking. Probably more Mlokos have been destroyed by gardeners who simply thought that they were dead and gone. What Mloko does, is to do a little Houdini and resurrect itself when the time comes for moisture. While the Albifloras like to be fussed over and hoed like a potato, this is one plant that is not that type of cultivar.

Daurica appears to only be a white form of Mloko, the leaves pucker when the roots are dry, otherwise the leaves flatten out.

This is something for you to experiment with and to understand that it really does have a good disappearing act. However many times the gardener really chops it up with a shovel, thinking that the plant died anyway. Sort of hate to tell its secret, not it will not be able to hide so easily anymore.

CORRESPONDENCE

Route 1, Box 50
Alma, Georgia 31510

Dear Chris:

Please find enclosed $2.00 for peony seeds. If you remember, I got some seed from you about three years ago. With some luck I may get some blooms next season from these plants. I will keep you posted.

Chris, as you may remember, I live 100 miles north of Jacksonville, Florida, in South East Georgia. The weather does get hot here in the summertime so I need to stick to tree peonies and early blooming herbaceous plants for best results.

Send me some seeds (T. peony, hybrids, etc.) you believe would be a good risk for me.

Maybe we can get together sometime at an APS annual meeting, or call me if you ever come South for some reason.

Take care,

Delano Deen

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118 Swaine Ave.
Toorak Gardens
South Australia 5065
Sept. 26, 1988

Dear Mr. Laning,

When I recently joined the American Peony Society, I mentioned the difficulty in obtaining seed in Australia. Greta Kessenich replied that she would send my name and address to you regarding this. I am now writing to thank you for your great generosity in the amount of seed that you sent me. The amount of seed that I have received in the past from overseas has been of the order of 4-6 seeds so you can imagine how I felt about your most generous contribution.

Most unfortunately for me, our area is very borderline for herbaceous peonies. There is usually not sufficient winter cold for flowering. However, tree peonies flourish and I have seen several specimens of the old European varieties which are over 100 years old. I have shared the P. lactiflora seeds with one of our Botanic Gardens, only about 6 or 7 miles away from me but at higher altitude so quite a bit colder in winter. One of their staff members is very interested in preserving the old varieties which survive in some of our older gardens. This particular botanic garden has a very good collection of peony species and was recently given quite a large collection of tree peonies.

Thank you again.

Mrs. Beverly Phillips

324 Wai-iti Rd.
May 9, 1988 Timaru, Canterbury
New Zealand

Dear Paeonia Growers,

I should have had this note away to you some time back — but I expect time has a habit of passing with you just as quickly as it does with us — and now we're into our first month of Winter after a very dry Autumn which is not so good for the farmers. Those with irrigation are fortunate especially if the water supply is off the larger snow-fed rivers, We have had frosts of 6.9°C — this last week — but they seem to follow the clear sunny days, and they give us those fiery tinted autumn leaves on liquid ambers, etc.

My main reason in writing this note to you is to thank you both very much for sending me your own shorter bulletin or newsletter which I much appreciated and also find most interesting and informative on the various methods of propagation. I was specially interested in the taking of eye-cuttings by John C. Wister from "The Peonies", P.P. 181-183.

I'm sorry to say that my efforts in T.P. seed raising are rather patchy to say the least. To my sorrow I let the seed containers have too much early summer sun and that was too intense for the tender little roots — warmth by all means, but no sun — as you mention in your notes — experience teaches us.

I am enclosing my subscription for your "Paeonia News and Views" and thank you both for my first issue. I hope you will find the cheque in order — my bank here in Timaru assured me that your bank in Kalamazoo would arrange that for you.

With the approach of winter here in N.Z. and not so very far from the Antarctica, I am always thinking of the Spring not too far away, and also how busy all you peony enthusiasts will be preparing your prize blooms for the A.P.S. Show in May- June. Good Wishes.

Thanking you both once again.

Sincerely, Marion W. McFarlane

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Birchwood Gardens
Wyllies Crossing
Dear Mr. Laning, 1 R.D. Dunedin, New Zealand

Thanks for the peony seed which I was most grateful to get. I am enclosing a money draft to cover postage and the balance to go towards the cost of your bulletin. I hope this is satisfactory; please advise if not. (continued)

I have a small nursery, mainly rock garden and alpines and also peonies. I would like to devote more time to peonies but as it is fairly difficult to get stock I am growing a lot of seed and hoping to increase my stock in this way.

At this stage I've had a fairly good strike rate with my seed. My method is to make a bed about 8" high and start with a layer of reasonably fine gravel, then well rotted sawdust and horse manure, on top of this goes a mixture of pulverised wood bark and fine gravel onto which I broadcast the seeds, covering them with about 1" of the woodbark and gravel mix.

If conditions get too dry I water them but usually not very often. I find most germinate in the first season as they have the rotted manure to feed on and do very well. By making such a freely worked bed I have no difficulty lifting without harming them, any that are not ready are quite safe until the following season.

We have only got eighteen acres here, one day I hope it will all be in Peonies!! Once again, thanks very much for the seeds.

- Frank Cochrane

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"Dewhurst," Bourkes Ck. Rd.
Upper Beaconsfield
Victoria, 3808, Australia
15th November, 1988

Dear Chris and Lois,

This year I am reaping the benefits of herbaceous seed received in 1984. I have had many flowers on the mixed lactifloras, '**Archangel**' x '**Nancy**' and tetraploids from peach and yellow clones. There have been several doubles in pale pink and my pride and joy is one enormous lactiflora double that looks similar to '**Cheddar Cheese**', which I have only seen in photographs. The flowers are now finishing and some plants look as if they will form seed.

Am really looking forward to seeing flowers on T.P. seed received in 1985. Would love to receive some more seed when you are next distributing, in particular T.P. seed and especially some Itoh seed if at all possible. Also, species seed if it is ever available.

Please note that my address has changed from 51 Airlie Street, South Yarra, to the address as shown above.

Cheque enclosed for 1989 subscription for 'Paeonia' and for seed. Is this enough?

Yours sincerely,

Judy Roberts

585 Napa Road
Sonoma, CA 95476

Hello again, June 13, 1988

Concerning tree peony propagation, I want to share an unlikely experience.

On December 2, 1986, we headed for Christmas in Northern California. In anticipation of a future move to California, I dug five suffruticosas and three tree hybrids to be replanted temporarily at a daughter's home in San Anselmo, CA. Prior to packing them, I cut all tops short and threw the prunings next to our burn barrel. In early February we returned to Washington. The cuttings had been exposed to the elements (relatively damp and mild) for slightly more than two months. When I gathered the cuttings up for burning they looked so eager to grow that on impulse I placed a dozen or so in a trench, vertically, without rooting hormone and with perhaps 6" to 8" of the 10" to 14'' lengths below ground. We thought our home was sold in May, 1987. None of the cuttings had leafed out but they still looked promising. I gathered up three of the "sticks" and potted them, still vertically. The others were disposed of, regretfully.

Escrow fell through and we took our place off the market. None of the three potted cuttings leafed out but they didn't look dead either.

In February of this year (a full two years after the cuttings were taken) we again listed the house for sale. In the interest of good housekeeping and curiosity I tipped the cuttings out of the pot. None had rooted but one showed strong shoot growth beneath the soil line. On February 9th I repotted the one, laying it horizontally, barely covered, with the top shortened so that the entire length could be accommodated by an 8" pot. Also, only those shoots facing upward were encouraged to grow; the others were removed and the wounds treated with fungicide. Still no growth hormone.

On May 3rd three shoots were a surprising 8" tall. When two flower buds appeared, one was removed.

Our home sold and on May 19th we left Washington, potted peonies travelling with us.

On May 25th the potted cutting bloomed in Sonoma. I believe it is '**Age of Gold**'. It will be interesting to check root growth when it is planted in the ground this Fall. (When we get pictures developed I expect to send you one.)

Further, seedlings (about 100) started from your herbaceous hybrid seed and moved to San Anselmo two years ago, reportedly bloomed and were lovely this Spring. They certainly look healthy now and will be moved to Sonoma this fall.

Sincerely,

Irene Tolomeo

Caprice Farm Nursery
15425 SW Pleasant Hill Road
Sherwood, Oregon 97140
9-29-88

Dear Lois and Chris,

Thought you'd like to see the publicity that peonies are getting on the West Coast. The cover picture, taken here, is of 'Golden Glow'.

Wish they hadn't used the one on Mloko since it took 7 years for it to bloom well, and we haven't been able to purchase any more stock. Do you know of any one that could furnish some? We'd be glad to buy or trade.
The Suffruticosa seed enclosed is from the survivors of the "transplants" of the two acre T.P. planting we'd located. Long neglected, it consisted of plants from seed from Chinese sources, Japanese imports and resulting seedlings. They are all really lovely. Needless to say, they sell like hot cakes, Hope these seed plus the Peregrina will find new homes.
Keep up the good work.

- Al Rogers

Caprice Farm Nursery
10-10-88

Dear Chris,

Hope the two plants arrived O.K. We'd planted out all the roots of '**Heidi**' and I couldn't quickly find any with heavy calluses.

Bob Tischler doesn't keep parentage but he's almost sure it's a Lactiflora. The only other L's I know of are '**Gardenia**' and '**Moonstone**'. David Reath has a Nippon that doesn't — can't find the name.

We used a potato peeler to take "skin" off a set of roots — then soaked in Rootone solution last year. Looked at them yesterday and they were heavily callused.

'**Sugar n' Spice**', the only home product we've that's good enough to register. Same color as David's Royal Rose (which is very good here), but a different shape. Only one problem. It makes huge roots in 2 years that can only be divided by splitting. A planting piece will go to 4" in diam. and 30" long.

Am going to try digging them at one year to see if it will make salable plants. The roots planted 2 years ago are heavily callused. A lot of cultivars take 3 years to form eyes from roots. Pedigree unknown (tag had faded) but think it was from seed of the first year. Some of the seed-bank seeds you sent the first year flowered. First divided the plant 2 years ago. This year we got 2 pieces — many carved off as yours.

- Al Rogers

September 13, 1988

Dear Chris:

It has been a bear of a season. Most of the peonies which were divided and reset last fall have suffered severely. Except for rains in October, the winter was dry and it ran right on through the summer. Wasn't fixed for watering except with a hose and very little time to do so. Just watered the most valuable things.

This past weekend pulling a few big weeds of those which got away from me (lambs quarters can grow five feet tall on three inches of rainfall — I've seen it) and up came a peony division. Looked rough and no new roots. However, there was a bud and if there's enough stored food to support growth it may turn into a plant some day. There are a lot of them in that category.

Haven't been into the established plants yet, but fully expect to find minimal new root development and fear there will be a low level of stored food in the roots. No little divisions this year if that appears to be the case.

Weeds — one thing that occurred to me more than once as I was trying to keep out the weed competition was that maybe the peonies would be better off to have the shade. They're sitting there in dry soil with the sun baking down on them. At least in the shade of weeds the soil stayed cooler. About July I gathered up some shingles and went around putting them beside plants, stuck in the ground to give shade. Also, as I pulled weeds they were laid over the tree peonies — something I've done for years where I couldn't water against heat and dry, seems to keep the foliage alive and from getting chlorotic.

There are going to be peonies in those new beds, but I fully expect them to take a couple of years longer than I had planned to get to producing size.

There were some happy observations came out of this, too. Some varieties handled the conditions a lot better than did others. In some cases these are my own originations, which is gratifying, in others they are old standbys.'**Roselette**' held up as good as the better Lacti varieties. Some tree peonies were remarkably better than others. I feel these are significant observations. Those plants have something special, even though we don't often need to have those qualities, it is important to know such things about our breeding stock.

I am sending with this letter some summaries of topics on which Roger Anderson and I exchanged correspondence this summer, Hope you will find them of interest.

Also, I am sending a copy of an article on peony species in gardens with comments on climate which came to me courtesy of Allan Rogers from the journal Pacific Horticulture. This is the most useful treatment of its kind that I have seen and something I feel we need in our peony literature. Hope that we can find a way to obtain reprints or do so ourselves for distribution.

- Don Hollingsworth

Roger: Plants from so-called contaminated crosses — Those from crosses which were supposed to produce hybrids but these seedlings come looking just like the seed parent, as in the Itoh Hybrid cross. Several years ago I lined out about 150 Itoh cross plants which were two years old at the time. About one-third of these didn't look like Itohs, but like Lactis. However, some of the "contaminated" seedlings were much shorter than others and had Itoh type stems. This year the plants were of blooming age, I had noticed earlier that most of the flowers were of Lacti form, and some were of the same color as my Itohs. These plants were all from crosses made using a mixed pollen consisting of Lacti, tree and Itoh, Three days ago I went to the garden to check my seed crop, for several of these plants were showing large seed pods. Upon opening several pods, I found this. First, seed were starting to turn red. Pure Lacti seed would turn brown, right? Secondly, most seeds were hollow and thirdly some pods had no seeds at all. What would you think?

Don: Plants from contaminated Itoh crosses — On one occasion I had an extremely short lacti seedling, a sibling to '**Garden Treasure**' and '**Border Charm**'. After a few seasons I discovered it badly infested with nematodes and presumed it stunted. It went to the trash pickup and didn't stay around long enough to flower. Other Lacti looking plants from Itoh crosses have generally flowered looking entirely Lacti. One semi-double of '**Miss America**' seeds forms a few seeds when crossed, but I don't recall having anything survive from the seeds.

Red of immature seeds is also seen in some of the early flowering herbaceous hybrids. These figure prominently in Saunders hybrids and their descendants, but you didn't mention using any of those pollens.

Another incident here is that I once raised a few seedlings of Lacti backcrossed by Itoh Hybrid pollen. These were entirely Lacti looking and after I saw their flowers, I dug the plants for grafting roots. Curiously upon using some of the roots those of one plant looked suspiciously like Lutea Hybrid roots. I went back to the trash bin to see if I could match some crown pieces to the odd roots and did plant some, but nothing came of it. This just goes to show that it is a mistake to be entirely presumptive that we understand everything about what we are seeing.

This is something worth looking into and it serves to make us more inquiring of the plants we raise to see if we can find that some may not be what they seem on the surface.

However, I feel we must be very skeptical of the variations we see and that it is a mistake to assume that every variant represents a new discovery. Look for those clues that would rule out that it is merely a variant of the seed parent species, things that will prove the plant cannot be straight Lacti — differences in flower anatomy, leaf anatomy, root anatomy, as well as flower structure and hybrid like sterility — as you have mentioned, or conversely, clues which tend to show they cannot be hybrid. It is appealing to find genuine differences, just for the discovery.

Roger: Rebloomers. In this drought you'd think nothing could grow, but just the other day I noticed some of my tree peonies putting out new buds. Other years I've had a late bud or two, but nothing like this. Now I see that I have two Itohs which are sending up new buds. Don't know if they'll ever open but the buds are there and of good size. Looks like dry weather might put peonies into a dormancy which they are now coming out of. Is this possible? I know this is the case with the two California species.

Don: Regarding reblooming peonies, I have long been interested for what it may help toward understanding the nature of dormancy in peonies. One observation that came up in a conversation with Neville Harrop of Tasmania, who handled tree peony grafts in plastic bags as I have, is that one influence for the reduction of dormancy is the mere passage of time. Another saying that has high acceptance among peony observers is that dormancy reduction is accomplished over time under cool temperatures.

The idea of effective level of temperature for dormancy reduction as it has come to be seen by some of us has moved from frozen (no validity at all) to in the forties or fifties Fahrenheit. Also, the possibility that a few hours a day of cool temperature may be all that is needed seems to be an interesting possibility. Fruit scientists have shown that apple trees respond best to a temperature of about 40 degrees with variations up or down requiring a longer time to accomplish reduction. There has been a tendency to assume the same conditions pertain to peonies, which is not established at all, just a reasonable association.

Regarding your observation of a rest period induced by drought, this may be all that is needed in some kinds, provided it runs long enough to meet their needs. Maybe what is going on is a combination of time and temperature which may substitute, partly, one for the other. Maybe time does not become effective unless growth is arrested, with cool temperature accelerating the rate of dormancy reduction over a given time. Also, dormancy may go to deeper levels on the declining day length or some other seasonal stimulous, then requiring more to break new growth, I am not encouraged to rely on the latter, however, at least not with the reblooming which comes from the Lutea group.

Several years ago when I had a group of seedlings of a Lutea/Delavayi strain, a few would break into a second, third or fourth shoot of growth, in a season. Some of these also produced flowers on each cycle of growth, while some produced flowers only in spring shoots. Others of the same group were just as firmly dormant after flowering in spring as are Lacti peonies, almost certainly requiring cool temperatures over time sufficient to get them through the autumn before dormancy was released. The seeds from which these were grown came from Silvia Saunders, from a friend, she said. Later, I heard a statement that some plants of these species grow wild in the fence rows at Gratwick's and wondered if that is from where these came. If so I hope someone can salvage some plants or seeds from there and keep the strain alive.

Roger: Here is something of interest. Today is August 2nd. The weather is still a drought in our area. In the garden A198 ('**Golden Era**'?) is still blooming with one flower. '**High Noon**' has several open and several more buds. Last week had a bloom on D-276.

I've never thought much about dormancy, except through raising seed in the house have noticed that the tree peonies will go through dormancy faster at a higher temperature than at a lower one. Itohs and Lacti seem to do best at 32 to 34 degrees.

Roger: Didn't get much of a chance to talk with you at the show.

Don: Unfortunately one of the most frustrating things about having the National meeting be an exhibition is the conflict of show activities with the information sharing activities some of us long for. I don't see a solution short of having another separate event, held at another time. The annual exhibition is a time for putting forth the Society to the rest of the world — for public information and promotion. We can't give up that function and remain a viable instrument of horticultural leadership.

Roger: I'd like the idea of having another separate event. I think this would be a great help to many of us and I also think more information would come out than what we read in the robin. I think when people write articles they tend to hold back more than if they were talking face to face. David Reath suggested a few years back that we meet at one another's gardens in different years. However, that would be hard for me as that's when the work is to be done. And, I'm sure others would have the same problem. It would be my idea to find a meeting place centrally located and during the slack time of the year to hold an APS hybridizing workshop or seminar. There are times I'd like to talk about matters and there's no one to talk to! Would this be of interest to you and could you get away?

Don: Regarding an off-season peony meeting, winter is probably the best time. Also, I feel the attendance is likely to be best if there is a planned program. Just what form this might take would depend on how much effort might be attracted on the part of the participants. Ideally, everyone would come with a prepared report or discussion on some topic, whether these would be observations which stir questions or the results of some trial or comparisons which lead to conclusions.

However, we might expect attendees to include persons who would not feel comfortable taking a responsibility for formal input. Nevertheless, I favor getting as many involved as possible. One of the most motivating rewards that can be offered is the opportunity for participants to be information giver, with a close second being the opportunity to share in the discussions which follow. This gets ideas out and allows each to formulate a conclusion what there is to use and build on out of the program.

I don't feel secure in setting up an entirely open ended meeting. Such situations easily deteriorate into a bunch of bull sessions going on all at once, letting important input be lost to many of the participants.

How to get this off the ground? If we are going to get presentations ready it might be best to work toward a year from this winter. That may be too far off to get much attention to it now, but for this winter it would be questionable whether we could get much of a group together considering the slowness of communication. My own situation will not be good this winter; it's going to be a very busy time. However, it might be possible to get a few people together and test some ideas about how to structure a more planned program for another year.