PAEONIA

Volume 23a, No.3 October 1992

Editors: Chris and Lois Laning
553 West F Avenue
Kalamazoo, MI.

Suggested yearly contribution:
$2.50 in the U.S.
$3.00 in Canada
$4.00 in Europe, New Zealand, and Australia.

Cricket Hill Garden
670 Walnut Hill Road
Thomaston, CT 06787
Sept. 15, 1992

Dear Mr. Laning,

After taking seeds for the last few years, we can return the favor by giving you some for distribution. All our seeds are from Smirnow's tree peonies. Shona Nishiki (as cross between Taiyo and Godaishu) and unknown pollen is a variegated pink and red 8" flowers. Pink Glory of China and unknown pollen is semi-double 8" flower said to be from China. Purple Heaven (also said to be from China) double 7" flower of dark purple, pollen parent unknown. Kamada Nishiki 6" frosted white edge on pinkish purple with unknown pollen parent.

We would like cream or pale yellow from Pehrson's Best Yellow F_2, Mloko x tenuifolia F_4 and Tetraploid yellow singles.

We would also like the seeds of the lutea species. We would be interested in buying plants of these as well.

In future years we will be sending you seeds of Chinese Tree Peonies that we've imported from China. Unlike Smirnow we will attest to the name varieties.

Thank you very much for the single whites you've sent along in other years. We like the fact that they bloom early, large, and make good cut flowers.

Very truly yours.

David and Kasha Furman

F/1324 Wai-iti Rd.
Timaru, 5th Cant.
New Zealand
21-4-92

Dear Mrs. Lois & Mr. Chris Laning,

My intentions have been better than my actions as far as sending you a letter and my subscription which I must owe to you and am overdue I'm sure — better late than never. It always pleases me when I see that envelope in the post from far away Kalamazoo — I often think back to about 10 or 11 years ago when I received a generous packet of T.P. seeds — what excitement, and some of those seedlings have flowered from about 3 years ago and have been sold to private gardeners around Christchurch, and elsewhere. Just seedlings, unnamed, but there were some beautiful colours shades. Our son and his wife are the growers and they had the plants all in buckets, flowering. One plant in particular was outstanding — a semi-D. The petals were a lolly pink for half of their length and then an outside 2" band of wine to light maroon banded the edge. It was striking.

They (the peony group) had a bay at a 3 day Floral Display up in Christchurch, and those interested just couldn't resist buying. Our daughter-in-law even had orders for grafted plants that she had done and planted this autumn and even to 4 and 5 yrs. ahead for grafted '**Zepherus**'. She has recently purchased a guillotine machine for cutting the grafts and that makes it a much easier task and a better percentage of takes after 2 yrs. in the ground. John and Dorothy have taken up peony growing as a retirement hobby. She seems to have what it takes to know when to spray and do the right things for good growth. Years ago (10-12 perhaps) we imported plants from Klehm's Nurseries in Barrington Hts., Illinois, and they are her stock plants for the grafts. I am enjoying seeing the progress going on. In a couple of months I shall be 83 yrs. of age — but still agile, thank goodness. I experienced a very sad part of my life last December. After 56 yrs. of married life together my husband passed away — he had failing health for some years — he was 86, but I never thought of him as at that age. But that is life and we have to accept it, in time, difficult as it may be.

I expect you will be watching your peony buds coming along to flowering in a couple of months maybe. I haven't noticed very much on T.P.'s in your Paeonia for some time; is it just that folks haven't sent in news — seems more on herbaceous P. and I find that I'm really past being interested in the pollinating etc. of these very showy garden plants. Would you mind taking my name off your mailing list when my sub. runs out, thank you. Maybe it has run out now??

As you will notice, the N.Z. growers are known as a Peony Group (not a Society); something to do with rules I think, and all the registered members live in the South Island of N.Z., strange to say. It's colder of course and they (the plants) thrive — very different from warm, humid Auckland way up north. I shall close my note and hope this scrawl of nearly illegible writing does not test your eyesight too much. Thanking you again and wishing you both good rewards in your peony work over many years I expect.

- Marion W. McFarlane

Marsal Paeonies
Old South Road
R. D. Dunsandel
Canterbury, New Zealand
1st September, 1992

Dear Chris,

You must have thought that we had disappeared for good with no seed being forwarded to you this past season! Two factors have contributed to this (1) a very poor seed set in the South Island where most are grown, due in part to the cooling effects, drought and unseasonable weather caused by the tailend Elehino and the volcanic dust from the Philippine volcano upsetting weather temperatures. Amazing as it may seem to you, no doubt, when you consider that the Philippines are so far away and in the Northern Hemisphere. At times a blue sky is above us and on the horizons it becomes apricot yellow reducing heat from the sun. This winter has been the worst for 50 years ?extreme cold and now 2 unseasonably (meant to be spring now!) heavy snows which have devastated the lambing of ewes which is in full swing. The numbers lost are enormous and will have a depressing affect on farms and towns and cities which rely on farming business for their livelihood. The 2nd reason for very little seed was that my husband John and I were in London for our eldest son's wedding from the middle of Feb. (seed time) until June (our mid winter) and everything paeony wise was at a standstill ?correspondence included! Digging root in June for customers is not to be recommended but had to be done whenever we could get out to dig in the rough, cold weather. What normally would take 3-4 weeks took 6. My sense of humour got left down in the bottom of my gumboots! However paeony wise we are hopeful that the snow and cold will produce excellent blooms this summer.

We have had our N.Z.P. Group A.G.M. with the largest meeting ever — about 60 financial members now. These are 25 tree-paeony and species people interested in either breeding (4 people) tree paeony (10) and (8) in the species. Hopefully in the future we will have a good seed pool to draw on in order to return good seed to your organization. Your last seasons seed has been up for two months and the tall red Dad F_2 Burma Midnight F_2 are looking exceptional with their bronze, red leaves. The wet type of snow didn't even worry them. We are all looking forward to the forthcoming visit of John Simkins from Ontario, Canada and hope the flowers are not too late as he's due in N.Z. at the end of October - beginning of November, when only tree and early hybrids will be out. Lacti and doubles are about from the middle of November to 1st week of December.

I am sending you what little seed there has been around and although late you never know your luck sometimes. I'll be posting them air mail on Friday 4th Sept. when we travel to our nearest Post Office 15 miles away —weather permitting as more snow is forecasted! We had many interesting experiences as we travelled around U.K., France, Holland and Zimbabwe and to our two sons in Australia. Paeony wise I made an extra effort to visit several people and gardens - Kew, Wisley, "Rosemoor", Beth Chabbo, Edinburgh Botanic Gardens, Benanklyn in Perth, Rivieres in Crest, Leo Fervig in Bonne, France, "Floriside" in Netherlands, Will send to you our impressions species wise at a later date. Hope your season has been kind.

Julie Allan

Wayside Gardens
Mr. Chris Laning
10a Woodlands Rd.
Timaru, New Zealand
8-14-92

Dear Chris,

Once again the time has come around to order some more tree peony seed, again somewhere around the 2-3000 seeds if possible from any good source of supply and colour range. Your service in collecting seeds and distributing them is much appreciated. I wouldn't mind if you could also get me some seeds of;

1. tenuifolia singles
2. tenuifolia doubles (if they set seed)
3 . cambessedesii
4. coriacea and/or broteri

if available. Not expecting you to go to a lot of trouble to get them but you may just have some contacts. Thanks very much, and enclosed is US $100 to cover costs.

Was thrilled to get some Clusii seed and now the first one has just germinated! As also many of the tree peony seed is germinating and popping up!
Of the 20-30 x's of '**Sunny Boy**' that are thriving 3/4 of them flowered last year and I might have sown 250-300 seed from them. Hope many will be yellows. Nearly every yellow is different either in flower timing or shape. One real double beauty is green with slight tinge of yellow fading to a rich greenish yellow, others have trumpets like daffodils and so on. Maybe you will come to NZ one day!

By now I have I suppose about 3000-4000 herbaceous crosses and species plants and about 1000 tree peonies. They seem to be all different. These include some rather special crosses made by an elderly man called Mr. Banbury. These crosses are Mloko's appearance and are bi-colour pinkish red on cream — mauve with red center and mauve veins on white with more plants to follow to flower. The flowers are smaller and dainty and the plant compact and low. I'll know better whether they are dwarfs by another season as they obviously don't like a wet spring, and have been transferred to containers. These plants came from seed from England 20-30 yrs. ago and he has been experimenting. Of course they don't measure up to the big, showy, and bright colours we now get, but their daintiness and tones are very beautiful.

I see you are interested in dwarf plants by your comments. I have 4 dwarf Delavayi-Lutea hybrid plants which freely set seed. Flowers are crosses between reds and yellows but not showy but highly scented. They flower and set seed at 300-450 mm. high (less than knee height). I have plenty of seed which is warm stratifying now. Do you want any for yourself, etc? You will need to let me know soon or they may start to root. I do not know where they originate from as the nursery won't tell me, where I bought them. Do D - L hybrids produce dwarfs or could they be a Potanini cross. Leaves look much like a Delavayi of which there are several nearby. Our D's and L's in NZ are shoulder height to 8-9' tall. Plants same age and T/P same time.

Well I must close now — which does bring to mind that if you ever found a source of Potanini seed in their 3 colours I too would love to obtain some. Many thanks for your help.

Yours sincerely, Derek L. Irvine

553 West F Avenue
Kalamazoo MI 49004 USA

September 9, 1992

Derek L. Irvine
Wayside Gardens
10a Woodlands Rd.
Timanu, New Zealand

Dear Mr. Irvine:

Your letter with the enclosed $100 was received a few days ago with the request for suffruticosa seed. This presents a real problem since our main source of T.P. seed came from Mr. Domoto of California. He no longer has his treasured plants — the land was taken over by a developer of grand houses! Other seed contributors send only small amounts and my clones didn't do too well. So now my problem is what to do with the Thomas Cook Bank Draft. Can I send it back to you? You regularly overpay for seed since the quantity of seeds is not available.

I know of no one in the United States that successfully grows species peony plants. Occasionally a hybridist succeeds with a plant or two, but none of us propagate any of these wildlings in quantities that can offer seeds for distribution. Don Hollingsworth is working on this difficult problem but without success. Maybe you can take up this challenge! It seems that most species of peonies are happy only in their native areas.

Our Delavayi-lutea plants are of the 4-5 foot range — tall and scrawny. Dwarfs of these species would be highly treasured. These would add greatly to my goal of dwarf plants. It is highly unlikely that Potanini could be involved with your Delavayi-lutea dwarfs since it refuses to cross with any other kind. There is no successful cross (that I know of), at least no plant of Potanini x ?? is available. Maybe with your climate which is different from ours you could succeed! Potanini is stoloniferous, a trait that could solve many of our propagation problems if success could be gained and, should you succeed, your name would go down in peony literature as one of the Greats alongside Dr. Saunders and Mr. Itoh of Japan.

Since your dwarf delavayi and/or lutea peonies are fertile (set seed freely), it is highly unlikely that any other species is involved. I'll try locating P. suffruticosa and herbaceous species seed but up until now success has evaded me. The genes in these difficult species are in the advanced generation hybrid tetraploids but one can never recover their phenotype that is so desirable.

Sincerely,

Chris Laning

Wayside Gardens
10a Woodlands Rd.
Timaru, New Zealand

September 20, 1992

Dear Chris:

Thank you for your kind note and the interesting comments made on Delavayi-Lutea and Potaninii peonies. May I answer your queries as presented?

Could you hold the Bank Draft till you are sure no tree peony seed is available as seems likely? Would you instead send me any seed from the best crosses i.e. latest available herbaceous crosses, please. I am becoming more limited in space for now of just general crosses but any new challenging ones I would be most interested in.

In relation to the wild species probably NZ has the best overlapping mini climates especially the South Island. I have now most species but the deep trouble is the care on a more than limited budget i.e. I'm a commercial grower trying to build up a small business (at the wrong end of my life). However I've been collecting them and all that I have grow very well here except P*. californica* possibly because I haven't learnt how to care for it. Do they need gravel to grow in for instance? I understand the Parks Dept. of the Dunedin City Council have a section for them (different species).

I've just gone out into the greenhouse and sorted out seeds from the smallest dwarf delavayi-lutea cross No. 129. I see roots just emerging — have covered with Orthocide powder to protect them and hope they will travel O.K. If not I'll send some next year. I hope the seeds will be time to my one — would be interested to hear. Hope your Dept. of Ag. won' t hold them up too long.

We are just coming out of a long very cold winter, record cold, record snow, and record length of winter. About 20' of snow in the ranges, minus 15°C (very cold for here — probably make you smile!), and a 6 month cold (3 months) have made life difficult with shadehouses and greenhouses collapsing with weight of snow. Our peonies are a month late already as they seem to grow at a certain soil temperature.

Well once again thanks for your help and am glad to send something back — you deserve it.

Sincerely,

Derek Irvine

RARE SEEDLINGS
Chris Laning

'**Garden Peace**' will give an occasional seed which will germinate and develop into a little seedling which dies before it is a year old. This year, however, one robust seedling is growing in a pot! This little clone is to be treasured because of its parentage. '**Garden Peace**' is a Saunders back cross from albiflora (lactiflora) x macrophylla, a plant that gives several white single flowers per stem that are truly classy.

Broteri x P. mlokosewitschi — From a row of about twenty plants of broteri x mloko one seed finally germinated and is looking real good. Because of its parentage this will hopefully be a useful clone, an addition to the mloko series. The Nosegay F_2 (mloko x tenui) plants are fertile, always giving a generous amount of seeds. But I'd like to use the broteri x mloko F_2 pollen to intensify the yellow in the flowers. The ultimate goal is a tetraploid that is as yellow — or even a more intense yellow than P. mlokosewitschi — a tetraploid mloko!

Corsica x macrophylla — From a generous amount of '**Picotee**' seeds received from Al Rogers, a goodly number of seedlings are growing in a large pot. I like the dainty lovely picoteed flowers of this clone and from what I understand, the seedlings also are picoteed.

The seedlings from all the foregoing crosses are to be used in developing dwarfs, and further down the line hopefully miniature strains will be forthcoming. Stoloniferous miniature peonies six inches high is one of my dreams.

Suffruticosa — Last fall tree peony seeds were planted in the open garden, covered with two inches of Perlite. Later in the fall leaves were mounded over the row and removed in the middle of March. Now the little seedlings are growing lustily. I won't have to transplant them until they are three years old! One and two year olds don't transplant too readily — losses are great but this year maybe a successful method is found.

Do T.P.'s have tap roots? Suffruticosa peony roots are long and thin so possibly have small food reserve stored in them. So when transplanting, root loss in the process diminishes food supply, lessening chances of survival. Coddling, shading, and watering may increase success.

— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —

SEED DISTRIBUTION

From Al Rogers:
- -T.P.'s - Suffruticosa
- -Picotee
- -Promenade — a macrophylla hybrid which he plans to introduce

From Laning:
- -Lactiflora mix
- -Roy's Best Yellow F_2, cream colored flowers, a tetraploid

From Laning:
- -Serenade F_2
- -Lobata hybrid
- -Black-red lactiflora
- -#113 and 114 - Sable x Super "D"
- -Nosegay F_3 - yellow single
- -Martha W: ., a lactiflora clone, excellent parent for Itohs
- -Advanced generation hybrid tetraploid mix

CALIFORNICA

From PAEONIA Vol. 6, No. 2, June 1975.

The Californica peony is native only to California. Even then the plants are very local in their dispersal and are rather difficult to locate. Areas containing the plants are quite densely settled once the patch is begun.

During the past year, my wife and I had lived in Southern California; Redlands, to be exact. We asked different people about their knowledge or awareness of the presence of this little known wild flower. No one we talked to was familiar with the flower we named. When we described the plant and its rather plain flowers, someone asked if we could be talking about what they called "bachelor buttons". This proved to be what we were looking for.

Arrangements were also made to meet with Dr. Dara Emery of the Santa Barbara Botanical Gardens. Growing inside the boundaries of the garden he pointed out to us a small patch of lush green plants with tall, slender stems bearing the small brownish-red flowers. Mr. Emery gave us directions to another area he was familiar with which also contained Californica. There, too, we found the plants to be well developed. Individual clumps sometimes reached an approximate height of three feet. Santa Barbara's mild moist climate was evidently just what the plants liked. The thickest concentration of plants was always to be found in the shade of the chaparral bushes growing on the side of the mountain.

Later comparisons made between the plants of Santa Barbara with those of the Redlands area showed the coastal peonies to be generally much larger with correspondingly larger flowers. The growing season was also earlier than we found in Redlands. Probably the milder temperatures and earlier rainfall were responsible for this.

Living so close to the wild peony area in Redlands as we did, it was only natural that we should attempt to make a photographic study of their growth and development. Beginning in the middle of December, we detected the very beginnings of the plants as they pushed their heads through the soil surface. With my wife, Sally, acting as photographer, we began shooting slides once a week for the next five to six months. At first growth rate was rapid. Within a few short weeks the plants developed into small leafy green bushes, very appealing against the somber gray brown color of the deadness of California's winter.

After such a beautiful beginning, the plants entered a stage where they appeared to be dormant. There was no further growth and no new plants emerging. For about a month everything was at a standstill. After a period of no progress, the weather warmed again and we had a few warm winter rains. From this point on there was no stopping them. The plants reached their full height, about 24 inches, and sent out loads of buds and blossoms.

During the flowering season, Sally took close-up shots of the flowers from all different angles. Another area where we were interested was in the number of blooms per stem. One slide shows five definite buds or blossoms on one stem. At the peak of the flowering season we collected blossoms and took them home. Each day we would collect the ripe pollen and save it until we had enough to send via air mail to my dad.

Since that time, Sally and I have returned to Michigan. Although the peonies of California are far behind us, their memory is not forgotten. The pollen collected is today being used to pollinate various flowers in the beds at my father's house.

- Mark Laning

On PAEONIA CALIFORNICA

Chris Laning
(*from Paeonia Vol.5, No. 1, March, 1974*)

Early in January of this year, Lois and I vacationed in California. Cold, rain, fog, sunshine, and green landscape entertained us the whole two weeks.

Part of our time was spent in hunting for P. californica, the wild American peony. Unless a person knows where to look, finding it must be sheer luck — we didn't have luck! This isn't a sad tale, however, since the enjoyable outing was supported by the knowledge that if all else failed, Mr. Dara Emery, horticulturist at Santa Barbara Botanic Garden could help us out. Very few people in California know about P. californica and buying a plant of it at garden centers is not possible. But here is the report of California's wild peony: grows as tall as 34 inches, is weak stemmed (unless supported it falls over and continues to grow from fallen position), shade loving, light green feathery-leaved plant. Growth commences with the first rains of fall and continues until June. At Santa Barbara Gardens on January 15 we saw plants in bloom. Flowers are pretty and of heavy substance and about as large as a silver dollar — well, maybe a half-dollar, purple and brown on the outride, chocolate brown and red on the inside with yellow petal edges. Petals are cupped, stamens are short and stout, making a beautiful yellow center; also an abundance of pollen. Carpels are a hybridizer's delight. These colors could be a welcome addition to the ones we now have. One plant had four buds on one stem! The early blooming could possibly help in producing ever-blooming, or at least, re-blooming peonies.

Dara gave us excellent directions for finding wild peonies higher on the mountains. We managed to locate a few plants growing beneath the chaparral beside the road — at about 3000 feet elevation. These were not so advanced as the ones at Santa Barbara though the biggest clump had buds just beginning to show. Also, I noticed that last year's stalks had been taller than two feet, tipped with large heavy seed pods. Naturally these old stalks were flat on the ground and moldy. Pods were still filled with seeds which we collected and brought back with us. While inspecting the remains of old plants and pods, we discovered two plantlets (seedlings) growing where a seed pod had fallen to the ground and had been covered with leaves. No, I didn't dig them up. They're still there (I hope).

Dara, if at all possible, I'd like to have pollen again this year, and seeds too! From last year's pollen I believe I have hybrids and from the seeds have two plants. These are in their second year now and are still very small. Oh sure, they're indoors — growing in the basement under fluorescent lights, getting what little sunlight the basement window affords.

— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —

CALIFORNICA (October 4, 1992)

Maybe if enough plants and enough attempts over a period of time are made, there may be found an adventurous species seedling that will appreciate a cultivated garden. Over the last 50 years *P. californica* has offered absolutely no encouragement, though we tried diligently. Can success be had only by circumventing the inevitable by applying irresistible force to an immoveable object?

So, what to do?? Well, if someone or a group of gardeners living in the general area of the growing *P. californica* or *P. brownii* would accept the task of transplanting a few clones to their gardens or raise plants from seeds collected in the wild, the program could be initiated. Then, through in-breeding for many generations, plants would experiment and change for sheer survival, as noted by the late Father Fiala.

P. californica and probably *P. brownii* offer small hope for raising hybrid seedlings by using their pollen on cultivated varieties of our diploids and tetraploids or the reciprocals since their chromosomes are arranged in a circular pattern, differing from all other peony species. Many plants and many seeds of *P. californica* were planted in my garden here in Kalamazoo, Michigan. The seeds germinated and grew for two years and then died. The roots received from Silvia Saunders didn't survive more than two years. Pollen used on lactiflora and tetraploid plants failed to produce seed.

With interest in species (wild) peonies expanding and the request for species seed, the distressing fact that species plants in our own gardens are rare. So *P. brownii* and *P. californica* clones remain of the "Don't fence me in" attitude resisting transplanting and/or hybridizing.

Now, Paeonians, re-read the article Galen Burrell found in the September, 1992, issue of the American Peony Society Bulletin #283.

- Chris

— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —

GENE POOL

Establishing species plants in quantity is not possible in Michigan. As of now I consider my patience exhausted.

P. mlokosewitschi, P. anomalea, P. daurica, P. macrophylla and many other species have offered problems for the hybridizer but their genes are now found in the advanced generation tetraploids. It would be quite an accomplishment if we could add *P. californica* and *P. brownii* to the gene pool.

In the September, 1973, issue Roy Pehrson wrote the article, "What is *Paeonia mlokosewitsch*ii?" Now after almost 20 years added information is available. Mloko crosses unwillingly with other species. P. mloko x tenui, a successful Saunders cross gave a plant he called '**Playmate**', and twenty years later he introduced an F_2 of this cross and called it '**Nosegay**'. Seeds from a '**Nosegay**' plant I got from Silvia Saunders produced seedlings which are now F_3's. Last fall seeds from these F_3's produced seedlings which are F_4's. Seedlings from '**Nosegay**' give flowers that are yellow fading to white. All of these plants produce very early flowers, therefore, while open pollinated, no other stray pollen is available. So this strain remains pure mloko x tenui, however no trace of the tenuifolia phenotype remains. When transplanting this latest batch of seedlings (last week), three robust plants with pink - dark pink buds appeared. It could be that the red of the tenui has made its appearance, an exciting thought!

- Chris