



# George Landis Arboretum NEWSLETTER

Published Quarterly by the Friends of the Arboretum

Volume 4, Number 3

July, August, September 1984

## PEONIES IN SEPTEMBER?

If you have seen the peony garden in bloom in June at the arboretum you may be ready to choose some of these magnificent flowers for your garden, and September is the best time to plant them.

There is quite a story of the beginning of the arboretum peony garden, well documented by Mr. Lape in 1972-73. It all started with a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Beal of Castleton-on-Hudson in October 1972 when Mrs. Beal missed seeing many plants of her favorite flower. Since the peonies have long gone from flowering in October, how did she miss them? Her own large collection with its richly colored leaves as background for later plants apparently had taught her to expect this continued show in the fall. She wrote to Mr. Lape asking about this lack and wondering if he would be interested in a donation of peony roots from one of the specialist growers. Her own collection of over 200 plants came mostly from Brand Nurseries in Minnesota. She said, "I would be glad to sponsor this project. However, you would have the work to do!" Apparently she was well aware of the planting holes to come.

Mr. Lape answered her letter immediately with an explanation of his non-success with peonies in that he had not found soil in which they would

thrive. His plantings had been in the low area near the vegetable garden where the peony roots did not like heavy black clay. He welcomed advice from her. He described an area on a slope above the barn, at the foot of a stone wall that separates the lawn from pines above. This area would be well-drained and received the morning sun that Mrs. Beal mentioned as being especially useful. Could they be planted in the spring, since he was about to leave for Mexico?

In a few days another letter from Mrs. Beal gave him information from her experience as to soil, space between plants, the planting holes, and the feeding of these plants which stay in place 25-50 years or even longer. She asked how many he could use and offered to write to a couple of peony nurseries to ask what plants they would recommend for a public planting.

In March 1973 Mrs. Beal was again on the job reporting that she had written to several large growers and had received copies of their letters to Mr. Lape and their assurance that they were sending new catalogues in April and May. She suggested that, since September was the best time for planting, the ground might be prepared in the summer.

In August Mr. Lape wrote to the Charles Klehm and Son Nursery in Arlington Heights, Illinois 60005, apologizing for never answering his

earlier letter which apparently had been lost in the Mexican postal system. But, having seen Mrs. Beal's copy, they had spent the morning making a list of peonies for a good planting, and enclosed payment. He also asked the name of a plant which had not been mentioned in the catalogue, but was prominent on one of the illustrations and he would like to add it to the list.

On September 3, Mr. Klahm wrote stating that it was their policy to donate the peonies to "good and worthy arborists." He also gave the name to the one Mr. Lape had inquired about as 'Arlington Federal', one of his own. The list of peony roots were to be sent later in September.

Mrs. Beal was delighted to hear of the donation. She wrote of the June meeting of the American Peony Society and told how most of their list were also Court of Honor listings at the meeting!

Below is the list, started if Court of Honor, and underlined as Mr. Lape's favorites when they bloomed.

- \* 'Nick Staylor'
- \* 'Elsa Sass'
- \* 'Ama-na-soze'
- \* 'Red Charm'
- 'President Lincoln'
- \* 'Kansas'
- \* 'Sea Shell'
- \* 'Moonstone'
- \* 'Mrs. F. D. Roosevelt'
- 'Bowl O' Cream'
- \* 'Dinner Plate'
- 'Vivid Rose'
- 'Top Brass'
- \* 'Arlington Federal'
- 'Moon River'
- 'Doreen'
- \* 'Barrington Belle'
- 'Pink Jazz'
- 'Burma Ruby'
- 'Scarlet O'Hara'

She added that she had ordered from Grand Peony Farms the following: 'Festiva Maxima', 'Duluth', 'Victory', 'Wattle Lafuze', 'Elita Christiansen', with alternates 'Hansina Brand' or 'Carolebel'.

As planned, these roots were sent and planted with care - a very enormous job.

Now, next June, you may go to the arboretum, list in hand, and find your own favorites. A few have died, but the rest will be a joy. Mr. Lape can give you any information on planting and care. - Merrill Bousman

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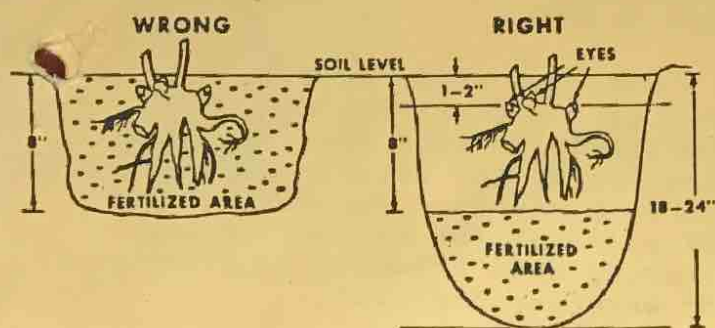
## PEONY PLANTING AND DIVISION

(References: Growing Peonies, Henry M. Cathey, USDA Home and Garden Bulletin Number 126, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961 and Wyman's Garden Encyclopedia, Donald Wyman, McMillan Publishing Co., NY, 1977.)

These very hardy, dependable perennials will grow in partial shade, but they produce the largest blossoms when grown in full sun. Shelter from the wind for the heavy heads is desirable, but good air circulation does help to control fungus diseases.

Peonies prefer to grow undisturbed and can in the same place for many years. They thrive in a variety of soils, provided the planting beds are well-drained and well-prepared. A slightly acid or neutral soil is best; a too-acid soil would require the addition of agricultural lime several weeks before planting. (Take a soil sample to your local Cooperative Extension Service to determine the soil pH and for recommendations to correct the acidity/alkalinity.)

Prepare the bed several weeks before planting time. Spade 12-18 inches deep and 18 inches across for each tuber, and mix well-rotted manure, compost, or peat moss into the soil. Pile loose soil on the side of the hole and fill the hole about half full of soil mixed with a handful of 10-6-4 fertilizer. Leave the rest of the soil on the side until planting time in September or early October.



Space plants about three feet apart. Plant the garden peony tuber with the uppermost eye not more than two inches below the ground surface. Put a little soil around the tuber and water thoroughly. Then fill the hole with the remaining soil and press down firmly. Water again to settle the tuber.

Plant a tree peony tuber with 4 or 5 inches of soil covering the graft. You can recognize the graft by the ridging on the stem and the different texture of the bark. Deep planting allows the grafted section to establish its own roots in the soil. Add soil and water to the planting hole the same way you would for a garden peony.

Just after the ground first freezes, cover the clumps with a couple inches of straw and a layer of evergreen boughs to prevent the alternate freezing/thawing that pushes plants out of the soil. After frost danger is past in the spring, remove and burn the winter mulch and spread a couple inches of summer mulch around the plants. In the fall, remove, burn and replace the summer mulch.

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Divide and replant peonies only when they become crowded, usually in 10 to 15 years. Never divide a plant in less than 3 years because transplanting upsets the plants and retards flowering for several years.

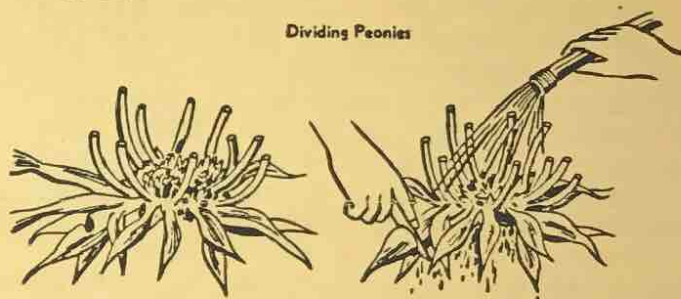
Divide plants in early fall. Carefully dig around and under the plants. As you dig up the clumps, be careful not to break off roots, especially taproots.

With a heavy stream of water, wash off any soil that clings to the clumps. Strip off the leaves.

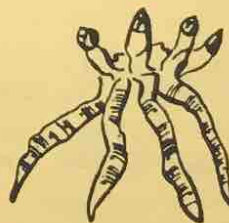
Cut tubers apart with a sharp knife that you have sterilized over a flame or in alcohol. Each section should have three to five eyes. Be sure to leave a taproot attached to each tuber that has eyes on it. As you cut, look for signs of diseases, and discard any tubers that look diseased.

Replant tubers immediately in a new area.

#### Dividing Peonies



1. The tubers on established plants look like a collection of fat sweetpotatoes.
2. Wash away all soil and cut away any damaged parts.



3. Cut clump apart so each piece will have three to five eyes and strong tubers.
4. Shorten tubers to 4- to 6-inch stubs, three to five eyes and strong tubers.

Water peonies frequently after tubers are planted in the fall and again during the spring and summer of the first growing season. Frequent watering is needed the first season to establish the roots in the soil.

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## REPORT FROM THE FRIENDS STEERING COMMITTEE

A seven-person steering committee was appointed by the Landis Arboretum Board of Trustees in September 1981. That committee, composed of Lewis Arthur, Constance Blair, Fran Finkbeiner, Arthur Garland and Doris Gdula, and under the chairmanship of Forest Corbin, were to devise plans and activities to further public awareness of the arboretum, and to increase volunteer assistance and financial support. To accomplish these goals, the committee would assist in the structuring of an organization of arboretum supporters called the Friends of the Arboretum.

As a result of a decision made at its initial meeting, a joint meeting with the arboretum trustees, the committee began publication of the quarterly newsletter in early 1982. The newsletter serves as a necessary communication between arboretum trustees, members, and supporters, and, too, it is mailed to various educational organizations and to other arboretums.

Committee member Connie Blair designed the Big Oak logo which is carried on arboretum publications, stationery, other correspondence, and on tee-shirts offered for sale by the Friends.

An effective 30-second public service announcement was produced by WRGB and aired during the 1982 lilac season through the efforts of committee member Art Garland.

An arboretum herb garden was planned, planted, and is largely maintained by another committee member, Peg Brown.

The Friends Potluck Picnic is becoming an annual event at the arboretum.

Over the past two years, the Friends Steering Committee has assumed increasing responsibility for the arboretum's Rare Plant Sale. Plant sales in 1983

totalled approximately \$860, in 1984 about \$1,500.

Funds for other activities proposed by the committee have been accumulated through sale of baked items, food, and beverages at various arboretum events. The committee's 1982 proposal for an auction was discarded when attempts to clean the barn were unsuccessful.

Special purchase items offered for sale have included *Clematis* 'Betty Corning', obtained by Richard Southwick, netting \$168 directly to the arboretum. Late arrival of an order of bulbs proposed for sale in the Fall of 1983 offered no profit and no loss.

Recently the committee donated \$200 directly to the arboretum.

The steering committee has proposed to the trustees that the Friends organization maintain, manage, and staff a hospitality lounge in the first-floor barn study room beginning in 1985. The purposes of the venture are: 1) to welcome and to provide information and assistance to visitors, 2) to recruit new arboretum members, 3) to offer appropriate and useful items for sale and profit, and 4) to involve additional volunteers in arboretum activities. The committee awaits trustee approval.

We of the committee feel that the Friends of the Arboretum should now organize and work as a structured unit. We have submitted, and the trustees approved in June 1984, By-Laws for the Friends of the George Landis Arboretum. (Copies of the By-Laws are available on request.)

The officers of the Friends will consist of a chairman, chairman-elect, secretary, treasurer, and five directors, all elected. A nominating committee is at work to present a slate of officers and a mail ballot in the fourth quarter newsletter.