

I love our peonies! Not only are the flowers exquisite and divinely fragrant, but the attractive foliage is very handsome as well. However, what makes our peonies even more special to me is that Jon transplanted them for me over 30 years ago from his ancestor's 600 acre farm in southern Missouri which they settled in the mid 1800s because it reminded them of their home in Switzerland.

Carefully examine these exotic blossoms with their complex arrangement of elegant creamy white petals and lovely pink tipped centers. Aren't they absolutely exquisite! Their only drawback is that they grace our lives for such a brief time.

To compensate for such a short blooming period, staggering plantings of early, middle, and late bloomers helps extend the pleasure of their presence. Cutting multitudes of buds and placing them in the refrigerator also prolongs the joy of these beauties for up to two months. When ready to use in bouquets, just make a fresh cut, place in cold water and add a little plant food.



Peonies are herbaceous perennials with either single or double, white, pink, red, and yellow blossoms- the double blooms being the most fragrant. They grow 2-3 high, bloom in late spring or early summer, and then die back in the winter. The tree varieties also lose their leaves in the winter.



Although potted peonies can be planted in the spring, they do better if planted in fall; whereas bare rooted peonies should always be planted in the fall with eyes extended no more than 2 below the soil. Be patient though, sometimes it takes newly planted peonies up to 3 years before they reach optimum color, shape, and quantity. If you are replanting existing peonies, do not replant until fall; if they are mature plants, make certain to divide them. Overcrowding diminishes air circulation which can lead to disease; to avoid this risk, plant at least 3-4 on center, in fertile, well-drained soil. Full sun is best, except in climates which typically receive hotter temperatures in the summer, in which case, afternoon shade is welcomed.

Generous blossoms, which can get quite heavy, especially after rain, profit from support by either hoops, stakes, or a grid of twine. Even though I let our plants die back naturally and do not mulch, it is recommended that they be cut back 2 above the ground right after the first frost, and mulched 3 deep. Although the time of flowering is fleeting, peony blossoms are such regal specimens of God's handiwork that they are valuable additions to any cutting garden. Either planted en masse or carefully situated among other plantings, peonies are sure to become a favorite for bouquets. So begin investigating the different varieties so that you are prepared to make your selections for a fall planting.



 



