



peony

BOTANICAL NAMES

Paeonia lactiflora, *P. lactiflora* hybrids
(pie-OWN-ee-uh lak-ti-FLOR-uh)

COMMON NAMES

Chinese peony, Garden peony

DESCRIPTION

Peony blooms typically range from about 2 to 6 inches in diameter, and they have tissuelike petals. Many varieties emanate sweet scents. Flower forms include:

- **Single.** One or two rows of large guard petals (usually five to 12 petals) surrounding a stamen-filled center.
- **Semidouble.** Two, three or more rows of outer guard petals with some irregular shapes and sizes of petalodes (inner petals) that are sometimes mixed among the exposed stamens.
- **Double.** Many rows of ruffly petals, with the stamens usually covered by the petals.
- **Bomb.** A double peony, with petalodes

(inner petals) that are similar in size to the outer guard petals or that continue to grow larger than the guard petals. The petalodes often form a mound atop a lower ring(s) of guard petals, which are sometimes a different color.

- **Japanese** (a.k.a. **Imperial**). Single peonies, just starting to double, with large yellow centers of flat, broad, petal-like stamens (stamenodes).
- **Anemone.** Similar to Japanese peonies, but with "powder-puff" centers comprising clusters of stamens fully transformed into small, narrow petals (a.k.a. petalodes) that are surrounded by five or more outer guard petals. The petalodes are a blend of the flower's predominant color with a tinge of yellow.

Leaves are dark green and often deeply lobed. Stems are generally 18 to 24 inches long and sometimes reddish in color.

COLORS

Hues include a multitude of pinks, reds and maroons as well as lavender, red-violet, coral/salmon, yellow, green, white/ivory/cream and bicolors.

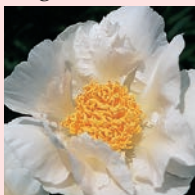
VASE LIFE

Peonies typically give consumers five to 10 days of vase life, depending on variety, stage of development when harvested or sold (vase life is only a day or two once flowers are fully open, see "Vase Life Extenders: Refrigeration, below) and quality of care from farm to florist. (See *Purchasing Tips*, Page 22).

AVAILABILITY

Depending on variety, grower and growing region, peonies are usually available from late March through early August, with peak season being April, May and June. Alaska's growing season enables growers there to provide these cut flowers through July and into August.

Single



'Krinkled White'
Klehm's Song Sparrow Farm
and Nursery

Semidouble



'Coral Sunset'
Adelman Peony Gardens

Double



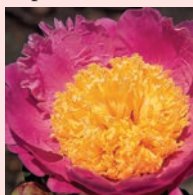
'Paul M. Wild'
American Peony Society

Bomb



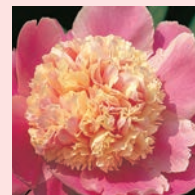
'Angel Cheeks'
Adelman Peony Gardens

Japanese



'Aurora Sunrise'
Klehm's Song Sparrow Farm
and Nursery

Anemone



'Cora Stubbs'
Klehm's Song Sparrow Farm
and Nursery

vase-life extenders

IMMEDIATE ATTENTION Unpack peonies immediately upon their arrival, and remove all stem bindings and sleeves. Check for *Botrytis* (gray mold), which these flowers are susceptible to in moist environments with poor air circulation. *Botrytis* will rot the flower heads.

STEM CUTTING Remove any foliage from stems that would fall below the water line in storage containers, then recut the stems with a sharp, sterile knife, at an

angle, removing at least 1 inch of stem.

HYDRATION AND NUTRITION Immediately after cutting, dip or place the stem ends into a hydration solution, then place them into containers half filled with room-temperature properly proportioned flower-food solution. (Peonies grow from bulblike fleshy roots, so bulb flower food can be used.) The hydration solution will help the flowers absorb water after being shipped or stored dry. Peonies are heavy drinkers, so check

their nutrient solution level often.

REFRIGERATION After processing peonies, immediately place them into a floral refrigerator at 36 F to 41 F, and allow them to hydrate for at least two hours before selling or arranging them. Peonies can begin opening almost immediately after being placed into flower-food solution, but immediate refrigeration will slow that process. Except for design time, keep these flowers refrigerated until sold or delivered.

(Continued on Page 22)

cut flower of the month

(Continued from Page 20)

ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY Peonies do not appear to be affected by ethylene gas.

CARE EXTRA If peonies appear wilted or otherwise water stressed, submerge the entire stems, up to the blooms, into room-temperature water for 20 minutes before processing them.

purchasing tips

- In general, buy most peonies in the “puffy” stage, when the buds are tight yet soft, perhaps with one or two petals unfurling from the bud, and showing a hint of color. Avoid open blossoms as well as overly tight (hard) buds, which will probably never open.
- Growers cut each variety at a different stage of bud development. For example, reds and some doubles (especially ‘Sarah Bernhardt’, ‘Elsa Sass’ and ‘Ann Cousins’) should be harvested slightly more open, but never purchase any varieties that are more than 50 percent open.
- Check carefully for signs of bruising, rot or *Botrytis* (gray mold) on blooms, leaves and stems.

fun facts

WHAT'S IN A NAME The genus *Paeonia* is said to have been named for Paeon, a physician to the Greek gods and reputed discoverer of the flowers' legendary medicinal properties, which were known to cure “21 ills.” The species name “*lactiflora*” means milky-white flowers.

FAMILY MATTERS Peonies are members of the small *Paeoniaceae* family, the only other member of which is *Glaucidium*, a poppylike flower.

HOME SWEET HOME *Paeonia lactiflora* is native to China, including the Tibet region; Mongolia; and the Siberian region of Russia.



‘Buckeye Belle’
Adelman Peony Gardens



‘Big Ben’
Adelman Peony Gardens



‘Many Happy Returns’
Hollingsworth Peonies



‘Red Charm’
Adelman Peony Gardens



‘Command Performance’
Hollingsworth Peonies



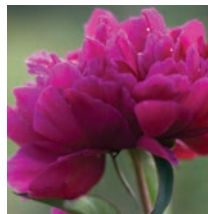
‘Félix Crousse’
North Pole Peonies



‘Paul M. Wild’
Adelman Peony Gardens



‘Kansas’
North Pole Peonies



‘Shawnee Chief’
North Pole Peonies



‘Best Man’
Klehm’s Song Sparrow Farm
and Nursery



‘David Harum’
Klehm’s Song Sparrow Farm
and Nursery



‘Aurora Sunrise’
Klehm’s Song Sparrow Farm
and Nursery



‘Beautiful Señorita’
Klehm’s Song Sparrow Farm
and Nursery



‘Ursa Minor’
Klehm’s Song Sparrow Farm
and Nursery



‘Cytherea’
Adelman Peony Gardens



‘Edulis Superba’
Adelman Peony Gardens



‘The Fawn’
Hollingsworth Peonies



‘Martha’
Klehm’s Song Sparrow Farm
and Nursery



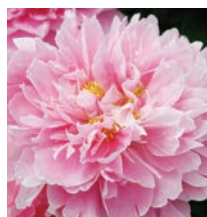
‘Rozella’
Adelman Peony Gardens



‘Dresden Pink’
Adelman Peony Gardens



‘Mrs. Franklin D.
Roosevelt’
(‘Mrs. F.D.R.’)
Adelman Peony Gardens



‘Kevin’
Klehm’s Song Sparrow Farm
and Nursery



‘Monsieur Jules Elie’
Adelman Peony Gardens



‘Cora Stubbs’
Klehm’s Song Sparrow Farm
and Nursery



'Sarah Bernhardt'
Adelman Peony Gardens



'Pink Parfait'
Adelman Peony Gardens



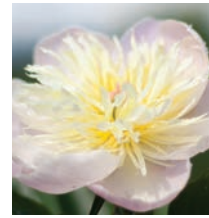
'Raspberry Sundae'
Klehm's Song Sparrow Farm
and Nursery



'Angel Cheeks'
Hollingsworth Peonies



'Glowing Candles'
Klehm's Song Sparrow Farm
and Nursery



'Bowl of Beauty'
North Pole Peonies



'Pink Hawaiian Coral'
Klehm's Song Sparrow Farm
and Nursery



'Coral Charm'
Adelman Peony Gardens



'Coral Sunset'
Adelman Peony Gardens



'Coral Supreme'
Klehm's Song Sparrow Farm
and Nursery



'Salmon Dream'
Adelman Peony Gardens



'Garden Treasure'
Hollingsworth Peonies



'Ave Maria'
Klehm's Song Sparrow Farm
and Nursery



'Festiva Maxima'
Adelman Peony Gardens



'Krinkled White'
Klehm's Song Sparrow Farm
and Nursery



'Fringed Ivory'
Klehm's Song Sparrow Farm
and Nursery



'Ann Cousins'
Adelman Peony Gardens



'Elsa Sass'
Hollingsworth Peonies



'Duchesse de
Nemours'
North Pole Peonies



'Bowl of Cream'
Adelman Peony Gardens



'Luxor'
Adelman Peony Gardens



'Lancaster Improved'
Adelman Peony Gardens



'Henry Sass'
Adelman Peony Gardens



'Nancy Nichols'
Hollingsworth Peonies



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