

Plant "Imagination"



Peony

Family: Paeoniaceae

Genus: *Paeonia*

Peonies, have a long history. In our family Mom grew them and though I am sure they are not one of the spectacular varieties available today, they hold a special place in my garden. While no one wanted them when Mom passed the nieces were excited that I had kept them and shared them so that now at least 3 generations have "Mom's Peonies" which are labeled as such. We will never know the name of them but we will always remember where they came from. It was just the side of the garage and the fragrance was unbelievable as a child and still lingers today. I hope you are fortunate enough to have a similar place filled with the aroma and beauty of the peony.

There are two main types of peonies: herbaceous peonies, perennials that grow from tuberous roots, and tree peonies, which are deciduous shrubs. Both types are very long-lived, so choose your site properly and prepare the soil well. Unlike many perennials, peonies do not like to be divided or dug up and moved. The tubers of herbaceous peonies should be planted so that their eyes are no deeper than one and one-half inches beneath the soil. Do use a ruler; and of course it will seem too shallow. But plant the tuber any deeper, and you'll have sumptuous foliage but nary a flower. When applying mulch skip the peony patch. Tree peonies, on the other hand, should be planted deep, even set below the level in that nursery container. Herbaceous peonies are more hardy than the shrub type, although both will do well. Herbaceous peonies require a period of winter chilling to flower well. Plant both types in full sun, placed where their flowers in late spring to midsummer will show to good effect. They will maintain their attractive foliage until fall, except for *P. tenuifolia*, the fern-leaf peony. This one goes dramatically dormant in mid-summer and can leave a gaping hole in your border if not planned for. Clip the other types back in the fall, after their leaves brown. Feed peonies lightly with a balanced fertilizer, once just before bloom and once just after. They'll do well in ordinary garden soil, and they require little additional water during the summer.