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THE PEONY.



SINCE we are sending out roots of herbaceous peonies as a part of our plant distribution for '98, we thought it would be interesting to use as a frontispiece a photograph of a fine clump of these plants in full bloom at the Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa. The cut is kindly furnished us by Dr. Saunders, from his report for 1896, in which he writes as follows:—The peony is an old garden favorite which has of late years grown very much in public esteem on account of the large number of beautiful new varieties which have been produced. The herbaceous sorts are best known and have a first claim on our attention. These consist of several distinct species, the flowers of which when unimproved, are single or semi double, but by cultiva-

tion, selection and cross-fertilizing, a large number of very fine double forms have been obtained. The Chinese peony *P. albiflora*, a native of China and Siberia has been very much used by those who have worked on the improvement of the peony. This flower was first introduced to cultivation about 1780, and was brought prominently into notice nearly a century ago; a number of the first new forms having been described in the Transactions of the Linnean Society in 1817. After this peonies grew rapidly in favor, and from 1835 to 1842 choice examples of the newly introduced sorts of that period were sold at very high figures ranging from £2 to £10 sterling each. In subsequent years, they were favored with less public attention, but the interest has revived in them very much during the past ten years, and in the catalogues of some of the larger growers of these plants, there are now offered as many as 500 named sorts all said to be distinct varieties, varying in color from pure white through different