

The Modern Herbaceous Paeony*

H. W. Cooper, Ottawa, Ont.

THOSE who have observed the improvements made by specialists in the modern herbaceous paeony, which is the most hardy of all the showier hardy perennials, now concede to it the premier position as the gayest and most brilliant of border plants. In fact it bids fair to outrival the rose as the Queen of all early summer flowers. It gives its wealth of bloom each and every year with scarcely any attention other than to maintain the fertility of the soil. It is perfectly hardy, standing our winters in the most exposed positions without injury and without any protection whatever. In fact it is now conceded that this plant is better without winter protection, the frost aerating and sweetening the soil.

Paeonies are beautiful from the moment their carmine stems and leaves push through the ground in early spring until flowering time when they are the glory of the garden. Their foliage is ornamental throughout the summer, and again in early autumn when their foliage is changing into rich bronze and red tones as the early hoar frosts begin to ripen them. The fragrance of the modern paeony in some varieties is redolent of the purest attar of roses; others resemble that of violets, and others that of the carnation.

SOIL AND LOCATION

Any soil or situation suits the herbaceous paeony. They are indifferent as to whether the soil is light or heavy, or whether they be planted in full sun or half shade, in beds by themselves, in the border or in the grass. To get the best results the ground should be dug to at least two feet in depth in plenty of well rotted cow manure or other suitable fertilizer added before planting. Great care must be taken to see that the manure does not come in direct contact with their spindle shaped roots, or the crowns. Growers now agree that this is the cause which promotes the disease they are sometimes subject to.

PLANTING

This is best done in September after the first frosts, or during October. The plants have then matured their growth and root action is dormant for a short time. This permits them to get established without losing a season's bloom.

Propagation may be accomplished by lifting large plants in the autumn and dividing. Make sure that there are one or more eyes to each piece, and immediately replant in suitable soil. Place the crowns not more than two inches below the surface. New varieties are obtained from seed, which is sown as soon as convenient after ripening. The seeds

are planted in a shallow box or pot and covered about half an inch. The pot or box being placed in some quiet, shady spot in the garden and watered occasionally through the next summer. The seedlings appear the second spring after sowing. Give them attention until the autumn when they may be transplanted into open ground and grown on to flowering size, which is usually four years from the time they germinate. If a few seeds are planted each autumn after the first four years you will have new varieties coming into bloom each season, some with single and some with double flowers. There is a possibility of obtaining a new variety of merit worth naming.

The fragrant blooms are of extreme beauty for room decoration. They should be cut just as the bud is expanding. Their delicate tints are not then faded out by the sun's rays, and they will keep in good condition for about a week.

VARIETIES

I will not attempt to say what are the best varieties to grow, for this is largely a matter of individual taste; all the named varieties are good. I will, however name a dozen good sorts, and which are easily procurable at reasonable prices from dealers in this class of plants:

Whites—Early, Festiva Maxima; mid-season, Duchesse de Nemours; late, Marie Lemoine.

Pale Pinks—Early, Umbellata Rosa; mid-season, Eugene Verdier; late, Albert Crousse.

Deep Pinks—Early, Rosa Superba; mid-season, M. Jules Elie; late, Livingstone.

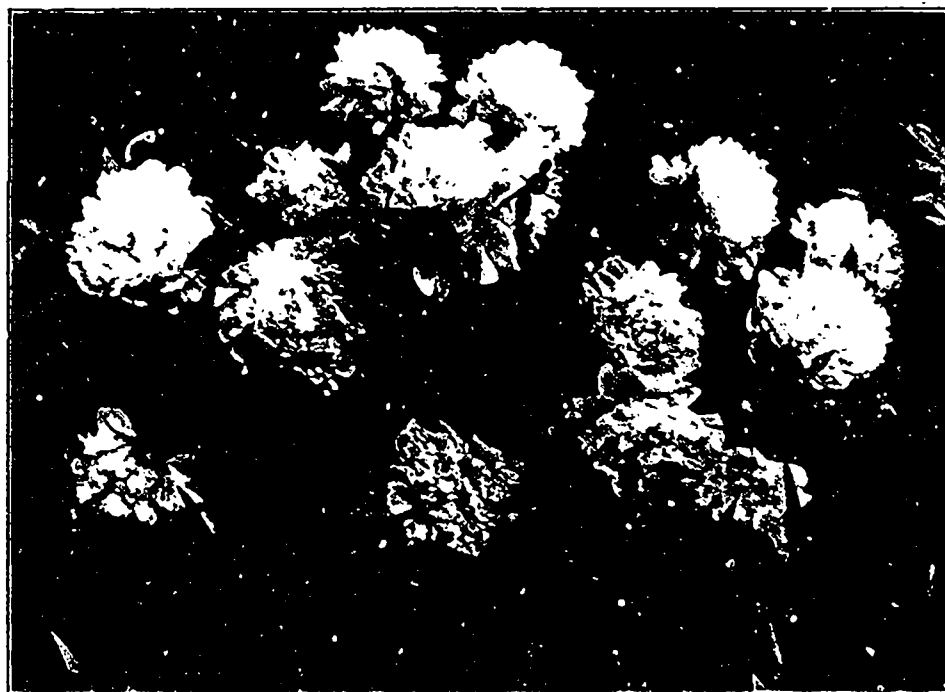
Reds—Early, Adolph Rosseau; mid-season, Felix Crousse; late, M. Krelage.

Anyone cultivating a selection from the above list will be well repaid by the fragrance and the abundance of bloom with which his garden will be filled.

Garden Notes

R. S. Rose, Peterboro, Ont.

Loosen the earth around each plant. A good tool to use for this purpose is a mason's trowel sharpened at the edges. It gets under the weeds and through the soil easily without disturbing the roots of the plants. Take a section of the bed each day and do it thoroughly. Do not try to do more than you can handle. Do a little at a time, and do it well. It will pay better in the long run than trying to do more and skimping it. In the dry weather it would be a good plan to put around the plants that need more moisture than others the grass clippings before watering in the evening. This will retain the moisture and the plants can drink it in at their leisure. If your garden is a large one it would also be a good plan to water by sections and give each section a good soaking. This is better than watering the whole garden with a light sprinkle, which is worse than not watering at all. The water should reach the roots, and not only go down an inch or two. Surface watering is useless.



Paeony Festiva Maxima: One of the Finest White Varieties in Cultivation

This plant, grown by J. R. Thompson, 53 Ontario Ave., Hamilton, had sixty-four buds on it at once. Several of the flowers measured eight inches across.

*Read before the Ottawa Horticultural Society.