

FASHIONS AND THE HOUSEHOLD

Peonies: Their History and Their Culture

By RACHAEL R. TODD, M.D.

In these days of specialized activities, when many of the everyday professions have climbed to the dignified positions formerly only accorded to the arts, the peonies have been cultivated so assiduously, and with such admirable results, that it should no longer be ranked among the mere hobbies. It has gained the dignity of a profession, and indeed in many cases yields the gardener no small return, financially as well as otherwise.

Many amateur gardeners devote their time, and all their available space, almost entirely to the production and cultivation of the old-fashioned flowers, claiming that their permanency makes for success. In a much truer sense of the word, than can be expected from any other class of plants. Given, for instance, one good sized clump of old-fashioned peony, a perennial without a peer, and scarcely with an equal, that has attained a growth of some years, where will one find more gorgeous coloring, more prolific bloom, more stability of growth, than it is possible to obtain from this one variety of plant?

"Paeonia" is the ancient Greek name of the genus known by the Romans, and by present-day gardeners. This magnificent race of flowering perennials, whose primitive forms have been in constant cultivation in Asia and in Europe for thousands of years, is one of the three oldest flowers known in history. The other two being the lily and the rose. Called by the Chinese "Hsia Ouang," which means "the king of all flowers," worshipped by them for the mysterious healing powers, the peonies have been cultivated in the Land of the Dragon for close on five thousand years, if history speaks true.

The Royal Rose. The peony rose of the mountain, claim, in an old tradition, that an ancient monarch planted a certain precious clump at the door of the tomb of his beloved wife, and forever afterwards during his life, repaired daily to the spot for the sole purpose of watering the roots with his tears and with so many drops of his own life-blood. Hence, they point out, the glorious crimson color. A less poetical explanation, however, is that the word "peony" was derived from "paeonia," a mountainous country of Macedonia, where the crimson species grow wild, with exceedingly luxuriant growth.

One other tradition is interesting. Pliny, the ancient naturalist of centuries ago, speaks of one, Paeon, a physician, who used the juices, extracted from the roots of the plant, to heal the wounds received by Pluto, god of the underworld, in his conflict with mighty Hercules. Pliny claims for this peony the honor of having discovered the plant, and asserts that it is the most ancient of all flowers. He further states that the plant is a preservative against the diseases practised by the Furies in sleep (nightmare). It is generally recommended to take it up at night; for if the woodpecker of Mars should perceive a person doing so, he will at once attack him.

Many Virtues. Aside from these various traditions mentioned it is easy to believe that, coming out of barbarism, cultivated plants because of their various medicinal properties, and not alone on account of their beauty of flower and leaf. The color of the flower and the shape of the leaf was supposed to give a hint of the virtues possessed by the plant in question.

What, then, more natural than that this great glorious crimson head with heavy with divine healing powers? Indeed, the ancient belief in the medicinal virtues of the peony continued down even through the Middle Ages, when it was supposed at that time to have supernatural powers to drive away evil spirits, avert storms, and to protect homes, simply by the fact that the plant grew nearby. In England, up to comparatively recent times, children wore necklaces of beads made out of dried portions of their roots, in order to avert evil spirits and prevent convulsions. At least, so states Harriet L. Keeler, in her book, "Our Garden Flowers."

Is any wonder, then, that we find the old-fashioned gardens of our grandmothers' times still cherishing age-old roots, hidden away in mossy corners, or brightening the doorways of modest old summer houses?

It is a well known fact that the grand specimens which grace present-day gardens, in May and June, are the products of the gardener's art, gained by a long, difficult course of cultivation. As a result of hybridization and selection, the present garden race has been produced, which, counting those in Europe and this country, must surely number over a thousand named varieties.

The first peony cultivated in this country was the double red, still and always a favorite. Where this form first came from is hidden in doubt, but the probability is that it came to us from Antwerp during the last part of the fifteenth century, and distributed generally throughout the settled parts of the new world as our ancestors settled down, the making of their first gardens. Of course, as everyone must know, the greater part of our old standard roots were brought in by the Dutch, settling around Manhattan. Certain it is for many long years the only peony of the American gardens were the double reds.

Large Contributors. How, now, were all these thousands or more varieties achieved? Into the making of these peonies three species have largely contributed: the double red, called peonia officinalis; the single white, named peonia alba; and peonia moutans, a woody species known to the Chinese and Japanese. This latter is the only woody species in the world and is called the tree peony.

By crossing the different varieties of peonia alba with peonia officinalis, a group of salmon pink to a lemon yellow and an intense tawny red. Imagine the furor that swept thru the ranks of florists. Imagine the joys they have before them. These mountains of tree peonies, came in countless forms and colors. Nor were they uncertain stock. No! Behind them stretched hundreds of years

of a magnificent race of double flowers from pure white to deepest crimson has been obtained. And in this work of crossing the tree peony was also used.

These tree peonies were first brought here about 1790, and their vivid coloring, ranging from pure white and flesh tints, ran thru a marvellous range of colors. Cultivation such as only Japanese gardeners are capable of giving. Some of these forms had been double so long they did not know how to be anything else. Others were single. One of these is the famous "poppy-flowered" white with a purple spot at the base of each petal, and it is this one that is thought to be the original wild form. But no one really knows.

The white flowered peony is a hardy child of the northlands, originally from the wind-swept steppes of Siberia. It is the P. alba, as mentioned above, used as one of the parent forms. Delightfully fragrant, pure white, eight or ten petaled, four to five inches in diameter, cup-shaped, with a cluster of bright yellow stamens, there is no more graceful blossom blooming under the sun. The many good qualities gained thru centuries of careful cultivation have all been shared generously with the many offsprings of its union with P. officinalis and P. moutans.

Enough, now, about bygone history, interesting though it be. When an observant person stops to think about the peony he must acknowledge that any plant capable of producing such enormous blooms must be well nourished. Consider that monstrous double head, the coarse shiny petals, twisting in and out, extending deep into the earth, often quite two feet from the surface, great storehouses of life and energy, the secret would be out. Well Nourished.

Choosing stock, buy from the most reliable florist, and buy the best roots possible. Do not begrudge a couple or three dollars for one root. It will pay in the end. The end, unfortunately, is sometimes a long way off. You cannot expect to have flowers from new stock before three years. It takes all of that time for peonies to get settled in new quarters. If a sunken root, you may make up your mind to wait longer than that. I have clumps, flowering now, that I waited five and six years before a single blossom was seen. Never buy less than a three or five crown root. This means a three year old root.

Where to Plant Them. In choosing the spot for the future home of your plants select a location, sunny, well-drained, roomy, and where no necessity for removal will arise. Dig out the earth to a depth of at least two or three feet, or feet, spread old, well-rotted horse, or better, cow, manure, to a depth of one foot; on top of this spread a layer of straw, or some such material as will lighten the earth, rendering it well opened to currents of air, and allowing for drainage; a good six inches of warm sand should come next; fill up now with fairly good loam, mixed with a little ordinary clay to give firmness; bring the bed up some six or eight inches above the level of the surrounding earth. This affords a rich feeding ground for the new plants, which must absolutely be left undisturbed for some years.

Peonies bear transplanting only with the greatest care, and even then, the set-back of the most careful moving will prevent bloom for often two seasons. As soon as the shoots appear in the early spring, a careful watch must be given to the roots. Those dark red-brown nubs (looking so much like inebriated noses, I always think) contain the flower blossom. To injure one means to lose a blossom.

If the leaf stalks from the preceding season were left during the winter—and this is often done for greater protection—care should be taken not to jerk out these old stalks in the spring. So doing will invariably bring up a "rub" attached to the dead stalk. This means a flower is pulled up!

For Protection. If the clumps are of a good age, say ten or more years, there will be from twenty to forty stalks come up. When they are about a foot or so high, a good plan is to slip a large sized barrel hoop over the heads; fasten this hoop to three stakes driven with great care into the ground. The hoop will keep the bush tidy, and prevent that

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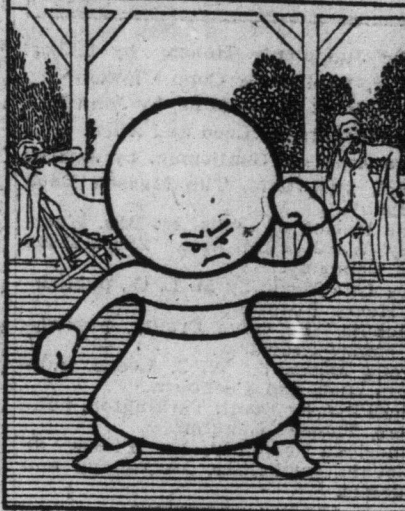
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G O O P S

By GELETT BURGESS



Amelia Pratt

"I won't!" says young Amelia Pratt; "I won't do this!"

"I won't do that!" Now isn't "won't" the naughtiest word

That anyone has ever heard? Now isn't that the rudest way

A Goop could answer? I should say!

Don't Be A Goop!

loose appearance so often seen when the heavy leaves and flowers fall down on the ground, often especially after a rain.

It often happens that a splendid showing of healthy fat buds appear—but they come to nothing. For years I blamed the blighted condition of the buds to the swarms of ants that for some reason or other, haunt the plant. But, the real reason is the presence of an almost invisible blight, a sort of fungus growth, that spells death to the buds. The only medicated spray that is efficacious is one called the "Bordeaux Mixture." This lotion should be sprayed over the leaves and buds early in the season as a preventative, almost as soon as the wee buds appear. An ounce of prevention—you know.

Most peonies usually set three or more buds to each stem. They should be pinched off excepting the terminal or largest bud on each stem, if perfect specimens of bloom are wanted. It stands to reason that more than one flower of the huge size attained by peonies can not come to maturity on one frail stem. If the buds are not removed sooner or later they will die of themselves, so the best plan is to nip them off at the base. They will then make growth thru the fall before winter sets in. But these people always expect bloom the following spring. They will not get it, however, because as a rule no matter how healthy the new roots are, it takes more than one season for them to recover from the moving. I feel sure it must be clear to all that the spring is by far the best time to plant new stock. Then thru the coming summer and fall the plants may be watched daily and their growing needs supplied, as can not be done if they are put in in the fall season.

There is no plant that will thrive, increasing in strength and beauty year by year, with so little extra looking after, as these same plants. By the third year after planting a fine well-foliated bush should be looked for. Every fall, after the ground has become hardened by the first frost, cut off the leaves to within three inches of the soil, and leaves this debris on top of the clumps to help as a top dressing. Later on, a heavy mulch of thick stable manure must be spread liberally over all.

I have found that it is most dangerous to attempt to work in any extra mulching above the roots. Invariably mischief is done because the roots are easily destroyed. To provide fresh food, I follow the plan of digging deeply outside the clump, quite two or three feet away from the roots, removing the earth, and filling it in with straw manure. This plan does away with the danger of exposing the roots to the air. Do not uncover the crown too early in the spring. Go slowly and thus save your buds. Even until the dark red "noses" are four inches above ground, it is safe to leave a light sprinkling of loose straw above.

Peonies moutans, the tree peonies, are most satisfactory plants to possess. The shrubby stems are the ordinary herbaceous kind are. In time they reach five or six feet high, and are covered with blood-red flowers. These forms are quite distinct from the ordinary bush plants, open quite two weeks earlier, and are surpassingly beautiful. No garden should be without at least a couple of these tree plants.

P. M. Van Houttei, a lilac rose, is extremely hardy, and rivals in appearance anything ever seen in the shrub line.

P. M. Elizabeth is the dark red variety. Imagine a small tree, five feet high, covered with large full blossoms, exactly like the ordinary peony blossom, the envy of every passer-by.

cannot say anything more just now about these peonies. To tell a one must experiment. But enough has been said to give sufficient aid to those starting out to have a bed of these flowers. One cannot have successful plants unless one works amongst them, and in the case of peonies, it is no task, but a joy and never-failing pleasure.

Daily World Pattern Service.



This design offers many possibilities. It may be made in low neck style, with or without the bertha, or with high neck, and again in round neck with the yoke. The model is suitable for all dress materials, for silk, lawn, linen, chambray, gingham, galatea, or percale, also for cashmere, voile, crepe, and albatross. As a pretty party dress it could be made of soft raincoat or even, with bertha of embroidery, or lace trimmed. Challenge or dimity, or figured lawn, would be equally effective. The pattern is cut in 4 sizes: 4, 6, 8 and 10 years. It requires 2 3/4 yards of 44 inch material for a 6-year size.

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good natured kindness lead you to give away places of a beautiful plant, peony lovers will, of course, have a clump of the old double red, also a clump of the single white.

Festiva maxima is one of the most superb plants that one could possibly desire. It is a bushy plant, a multi-millionaire when my festiva is in flower. Look at the photo of a ten year old clump, taken last June. Peonies bloom together. At the time it had "its picture taken." Think of that. The flower is white—as the driven snow; central petals flaked with delicate rose; most delicate and elusive perfume. Such a beauty! You will have to pay well, however; do not begrudge two or three dollars for a small root.

Peonies maxima is a late flowering variety, coming along about the end of August. Rich, glowing, blood-red, like August. Rich, glowing red, like great burning rubies. One would declare that the flower was lighted up from within by a brilliant candle.

Blooming ten days or two weeks before these special varieties named are the old-fashioned peonies with very full, double, and often fragrant flowers. P. rubra, darkest crimson known, blooms the earliest of all giving an abundance of great flowers. P. rosea, peonies pink, fragrant as a cabbage rose, blooms a day or so later, and is a never-failing joy to the eye.

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"WE recommend the Royal Baking Powder as superior to all others. It is indispensable for finest food."

—United Cooks and Pastry Cooks Association of the United States.



A MAN IN THE OPEN

By Roger Pocock.

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Was it my voice telling baby to go and get dry feet? Was it my hand grasping Billy's horny paw? For I heard my roaring canon, saw my cliffs, my embattled sculptured cliffs, and once more seemed to walk with Jesse in Cathedral Grove. I could hear my dear man, speaking across the years, "Say, youngster, when you sawed off that table leg to make your mother's limb, what did you do with the casters?"

I laughed, I cried. Oh, yes, of course, I made a fool of myself. For this dear lad came out of Wonderland, this heedless ruffian who knew of my second marriage, who had such a tale to tell of "Madame Scotland." Oh, haven't you heard? Her precious baby, David is illegitimate! Couldn't I hear my neighbor, Mrs. Pollock, telling that story at the Scandal Club? Then a discreet paragraph from Mapple in Home Truths would be libel enough to brand a public sinner. My mother would suggest ever so gently that in the interests of the family, my retirement to a warmer climate—say Italy, would be so suitable. And madame's illegitimate son would be barred from decent schools. Oh, I could see it all!

With his pea-jacket thrown open, wiping his flushed face with a red handkerchief, shifting from one foot to the other in torment of uneasiness, blowing like some beast come up from the depths to breathe, Billy consented not to run away from my hysterics.

Feeling ill-bred and common, I begged Billy's pardon, made him sit down, tried ever so hard to put him at his ease. Poor lad! His father condemned him, his mother such a wicked old harpist, his life, to say the very least, uncouth. Yet somehow out of

that rough savage face shone the eyes of a gentleman, and there was manliness in all he said, in everything he did. After that great journey for my sake, how could I let him doubt that he was welcome?

"I know I'm rough," he said humbly, "but you seem to understand. You know I'm straight. You won't mind straight talk unless you're changed, and you're not changed—at least not that way, mum."

Changed! Ah, how changed! The looking-glass had better things to tell me, and crying makes me such a frump. I never felt so plain. And the eyes of a young man are often brutally frank to women.

"Don't mind about me, Billy. Say what you've come to tell me." "Been gettin' it ready to say ever since I started for England. Look here, mum, I want to go back to the beginning, to when I was a kid, an' mother kep' that hash house in Abilene. I've mind if I speak—I mean about his here Polly."

I set my teeth and hoped he would be quick. "Well, ye see, mum, she only done it for a joke, and the way Jesse treated her."

"I can't hear this." "You don't mind if I say that mother and me haven't no use for Jesse?" "I know that."

"Well, mother put her up to the idea. To get shut of him, she shamed dead. I helped. I say she done right, mum. If she'd let it go at that, I'd take her side, right now."

"Billy, what that a real marriage?" "It was that. She's Jesse's wife all right."

There was something which braced me in his callous frankness. "I hoped," I said, "I go on."

"Well, mother hated Jesse somethin' chronic. Afterward when—well, she had to run for the British possessions, and we met up with Jesse again by accident. He give us a shack and some land, but mother an' me had our

pride. How would you like to take charity? Mother hated him still worse, and don't you imagine I'd go back on her. She's my mother."

"Then you married Jesse. Of course, mother and me both knew that Pelly was alive. Father knew, too—and father was around when no one but us ever seen him. We knew that Pelly was alive, and mother would have given Jesse dead away, only we stopped her. Father said it was none of our business. Father liked Jesse. I thought the world of you, so when mother wrote to Pelly, we'd burn her letters."

What an escape for us! "Then you saved mother from burning in that shack, and afterward she hated Jesse worse, because she couldn't hit him for fear of hurting you. Oh, she was mad because she'd got fond of you."

"And you took us into your ranch. Charity again, and you said! Under Protestant colors, both of yez. The way mother prayed for Jesse was enough to scorch his bones." Billy chuckled. "I ain't religious—I drink, and mother's professin' Catholic cuts no figure with me."

"Then there's the fightin' between father's gang and Jesse's. Dad hung Jesse got the dollars. Rough, common, no-account, white trash, like mother an' me, hears Jesse expounding the Scriptures. We ain't got no feelings same as you."

Poor lad! Poor savage gentleman! "You saved me from murdering Jesse, and got me away from that ranch. Since then I've followed the sea. There's worse men than Jesse. I seen worse grub, worse treatment, worse times in general since—I quit that ranch. Five years at sea."

There was the glamor, the greatness of the sea in this lad's eyes, just as in Jesse's eyes. Sailors may be rugged, brutal, fierce—not vulgar. Men reach out into spaces where we sheltered women cannot follow.

(To Be Continued.)

Sleepless Nights Tell of Exhausted Nerves

Sleeplessness may arise from a variety of causes, but it is most common to persons who are nervous or whose nerves are temporarily deranged. Complete insomnia quickly ends in death.

So long as the nerves and brain are excited or irritated sleep is impossible. When your interest is so little taken up with other things that you begin to yawn you recognize this as a sign that you are ready for sleep. Fatigue is upon you, and you are ready to dismiss all other matters and seek the restoration of Nature.

Persistent sleeplessness comes as a warning that your nerves are out of tune. Dr. Chase's Nerve Food does not produce sleep by deadening the nerves, but it does remove the symptom naturally by restoring the nervous system to health and strength. Continued sleeplessness means a tremendous loss to body and mind, for during the sleeping hours Nature makes good the vitality consumed in the day's work.

When you are subject to sleeplessness you can usually find other symptoms of nervous exhaustion present, such as headache, indigestion, nervousness and irritability, loss of memory and difficulty in concentrating the mind.

These warnings are not to be lightly overlooked, for they tell of approaching prostration or paralysis. There is nothing like Dr. Chase's Nerve Food to build up the exhausted nervous system. In a few days the nerves are so

steadied and composed that you sleep well, and by patient and persistent treatment health is fully restored.

Misery of Sleeplessness

Mr. Dennis Mackin, Maxton, Sask., writes: "I have just finished using the sixth box of Dr. Chase's Nerve Food, and I must say that when I commenced using it my nerves were so bad that I could scarcely get any sleep. I would lie in bed nearly all night without sleep, and one who has this trouble knows the misery of sleepless nights. The Nerve Food helped me from the start, and has built up my nervous system wonderfully. I now enjoy good, sound sleep, and instead of feeling tired in the mornings I am strong and healthy and well fitted for my daily work."

Could Not Rest or Sleep

Mr. F. A. Krutz, Schwartz, Que., writes: "For about one year before using Dr. Chase's Nerve Food I was a complete nervous wreck. Could not rest or sleep, was irritable and easily excited, and had indigestion and dreadful headache, and I feared prostration or paralysis."

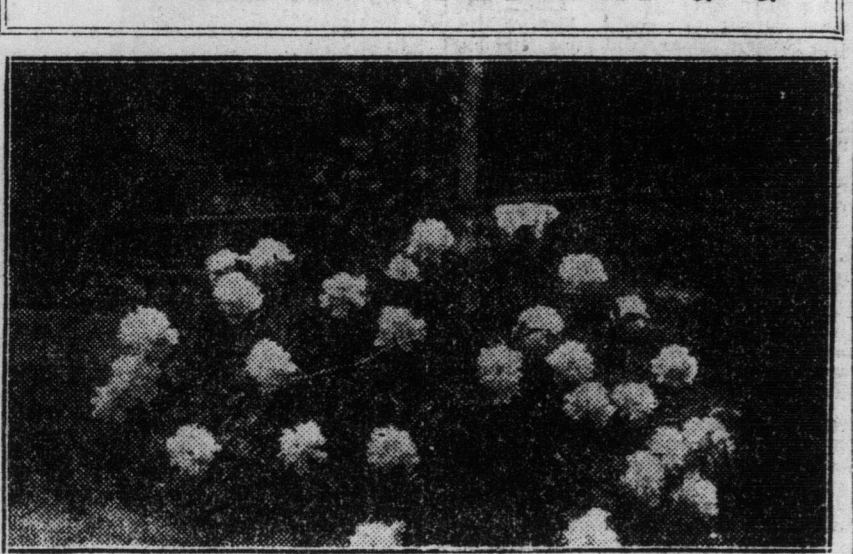
"After the first three boxes of Dr. Chase's Nerve Food I felt greatly improved, and six boxes made me entirely well and strong. There is no treatment in the world above Dr. Chase's Nerve Food as a means of building up the nervous system."



Dr. Chase's Nerve Food

50 cents a box, 6 for \$2.50, all dealers, or Edmansson, Bates & Co., Limited, Toronto.

FESTIVA MAXIMA



A double peony. This clump is ten or more years old.