

WISCONSIN PEONY SOCIETY LTD

July 2020

President's Message

Cory Tischman, President – contact at wipeonysociety.president@gmail.com

Peony season seems to take forever to come around and is often gone in a blink of an eye. Thankfully, with today's technology photography the world around us is a lot easier. In May, we announced our 2020 Photo Contest and asked members to snap pictures of their favorite blooms. We had five categories to enter in this year: general garden, herbaceous, Itoh, species, and woody peonies. The winners each will receive a \$25 in Peony Bucks which can be redeemed at the fall auction. We received a ton of entries and they will be posted online and on the website.

August is also right around the corner, and as of this time, we will still be doing our grafting class, so please sign up when you get a chance as space will likely be limited. Our fall auction is still on for October, but due to COVID-19 pandemic, the format of the auction may be subject to change in order to accommodate the safety of our members. More details will be coming soon as plans become more finalized.

As always, we are constantly on the lookout for interested individuals who would like to volunteer or be interested in a leadership position in one of our committees. If you are interested, or maybe want to know more, you can contact me using the email: wipeonysociety.president@gmail.com. Otherwise, if you want to find out about what we are doing here in Wisconsin, check out our website: www.wipeonysociety.org or visit us on Facebook: 'Wisconsin Peony Society Group'.

Calendar of Events

August 29th – Grafting Class
1:00 pm at Solaris Farm by reservation only.

September 30th - October 2rd – Online Fall Root Auction

October 3rd - Fall Root pickup at 11am - 4 pm at West Madison Research Station

October 14th - deadline for all roots to be paid for and picked up.

****Specific times and details will be provided closer to the date of the event****

Photo Contest Winners for 2020!

General Garden: *Cynthia Lindstedt*



Herbaceous: *Steve Johnson, 'Vanilla Schnapps'*



Itoh: *Kay Wenzel, 'Bartzella'*



Species: *Rita Thomas, P. tenuifolia rubra plena*



Woody: *Jerri O'Connor, 'Ganymede'*



Woody Peony Grafting Class

Jordan Kabat, Vice President of Wisconsin Peony Society

Despite the pandemic, the Wisconsin Peony Society is still planning on holding a woody peony grafting class Saturday, August 29th. To aid in the assurance of health and safety of participants, the class will socially distance out of doors onsite at Solaris Farms in Reedsville, Wisconsin. The class will be led by farm owner Nate Bremer, and will begin at 1:00 PM. All supplies, including a range of scion material from various cultivars will be made available. In lieu of the typical potluck luncheon, participants are encouraged to either bring their own bagged lunch, or plan to eat ahead of time due to pandemic concerns. Interested individuals may register online on the WPS website, wipseonysociety.org, or by contacting WPS Vice President Jordan Kabat, directly via email at jkabat89@yahoo.com, or by calling 920-819-3455. A \$20.00 registration fee applies to cover the cost of supplies. Payments may be made at the time of registration, either online, or by sending a check payable to the Wisconsin Peony Society to Jeff Delaney, WPS Treasurer, at jeffhdelaney@gmail.com. Space is limited! Please register early to ensure your spot.

Adding to the West Madison Ag Research Station Peony Garden

I was awakened one night quite abruptly. Whether it came from a dream or not, I am not sure. It was the night before what could have been my last open house visit to Song Sparrow in Avalon, Wisconsin. Home to fields of beauty and greenhouses filled with plants and trees so well cared for, cultivars seen in few, if any other places. Times I have treasured over the years for so many reasons.

Thoughts of preserving the beauty of the past were overwhelming. What will happen to all of those peony cultivars ultimately? The answers to these questions were not readily available. My pessimistic side was prevailing. Would these cultivars get into the hands of those that would work with them to move them forward? Or would the past be lost somehow? What, if anything, could be done in a situation that I had little control over?

Over the next several days, thoughts came through my mind, as well as memories of time spent in the Klehm Fields during APS tours over the last decade. Greenhouse tours with my daughters, visits there with friends and talks with the staff there, whom I have gotten to know over the years. There is nothing in the world like walking through a field of blooming peonies. Gratitude for the opportunities I have had to do these things also dominated my thoughts. In some way, preserving some of this era of time from generations of a family with roots in peonies, must be possible. How could this be done?

I would like to thank Scott Parker for his several hours with me over the phone, discussing possibilities that might exist to preserve some of these very special Klehm Peony Varieties. From those conversations, two ideas developed, one being the additions to the West Madison Ag Research Station of Klehm Peonies that may be worthy of Award of

Landscape Merit trials and the other being the new WPS Guest Garden Program.

Next step was to explain these ideas and see if there would be any support. I emailed Cory Tischman, current WPS President, to run these rough ideas by and ask for WPS funding for these ideas. Without the funding and support from WPS, these ideas would not become a reality. Cory was enthusiastic and very supportive. Ultimately, these ideas went to the WPS Board of Directors and motions to fund both ideas passed unanimously.

From there, I asked for input on cultivars that may exhibit ALM potential, as defined by the American Peony Society. I began with Klehm cultivars that have not yet been awarded, and that by description, may fit the characteristics. Compiled a list and sent this list to a few select growers, so that they could submit comments on these cultivars or add some that I may have overlooked.

A list was compiled and Janet Hedtcke from West Madison Ag Research Station was contacted about the potential of adding these ALM potential Klehm varieties to the peony displays there. Janet was very helpful throughout this process and made room for these new additions. Their staff prepared the bed for planting, all I had to do was bring the peonies, a shovel and garden markers.

Late September, the Klehm peony varieties arrived for planting. It was tough finding a time where the soil was dry enough to plant, but ultimately there was a window. My daughter Madeline was kind enough to help me, on short notice. It took us a few hours, but we got them in and watered. And we still have some room in that bed that I hope to fill in the coming years. Janet, from West Madison Ag Research Station shared that the peonies are very popular during bloom time and bring in a lot of visitors.

So it is, in this addition to the West Madison Ag Research Station peony bed, a bit of local history is preserved. Wisconsin and Illinois bred peonies from the Klehm Family to be shared in public gardens in Wisconsin for all to enjoy. I encourage you to visit these gardens during bloom time. Some of the varieties we added are 'White Whicker', 'Super Gal', 'Princess Bride', 'Class Act', 'Sweetie', 'Clown', 'Glory Hallelujah', 'Pink Giggles', 'Bashful Pink', 'Elk Grove', 'Clown', 'Raspberry Clown', Lancaster Imp', 'Orchid Annie', Lavender Whisper', 'Lavender Princess', 'Emma Klehm', 'Pink Sweet Pea' and 'Silver Daubed'.



2020 Annual Root Auction

The fall auction will be held online starting on September 30th and run until 6pm on Friday October 2nd. Pick up for roots will be on Saturday at the West Madison Agricultural Research Station where we normally hold meetings and the auction. We ask when people arrive, that they stay in their cars, unless dropping off roots. We will have someone come to your vehicle and gather your information and payment, and bring the roots to you. Pick up for roots on Saturday is from 11-4pm. If you do not pick your roots up at this time, you will be asked to pick up your roots in Eau Claire, WI and you will need to call in advance to schedule a pick up time. If you are wanting your roots shipped, the winner is responsible for all shipping costs and payment needs to be received prior to roots being shipped. Please note that roots asked to shipped may need to be trimmed in order to fit in the boxes. The cut off date to claim and pay for roots is October 14th. Any unclaimed or unpaid for roots will be destroyed.

****The Wisconsin Peony Society is not responsible for any unclaimed or unpaid roots.****

All checks can be made out to the Wisconsin Peony Society, and if you are paying after the pick up date, checks can be sent to treasurer Jeff Delaney at 1136 Barron St., Eau Claire, WI 54703

If you have roots to donate, please contact Scott Parker at oldtooltrader@centurytel.net . The deadline for donations is September 15th.

If you have any questions you can contact Cory Tischman at wipeonysociety.president@gmail.com

Powdery Mildew, a Perennial Pest

Although peonies can be among the most trouble-free plants we have in our gardens, they are not immune to disease or insect damage. This time of the year the most common problem is the fungal condition known as powdery mildew, which can make the foliage look as if it has been whitewashed.

The chief thing to keep in mind with powdery mildew is that the ill effects are mainly cosmetic. At its worst it may weaken a plant, but it's highly unlikely that it has ever killed a peony. If left untreated, infected plants—with good fall cleanup as is always recommended for peonies—should grow and bloom as well as ever the next year.

That said, gardeners like to see healthy green foliage throughout the growing season. Powdery mildew can make that goal a real challenge to achieve because of the nature of the disease and the difficulty in controlling it. Peony growers are not alone in this challenge. A wide range of ornamental and food-producing plants can serve as hosts to the nearly 11,000 species of fungus that can cause powdery mildew.

The “powder” is really the mycelium or tentacles of the fungus and long chains of reproductive spores. The fungus can cause dwarfing of leaves, which may turn yellow and drop off. Flowers and fruit can become deformed. Because peonies bloom early in the growing season, it rarely harms the appearance of the bloom, but may limit the efficiency of a plant's ability to photosynthesize energy needed for optimal growth.

Powdery mildew can overwinter in dormant buds, plant stems or fallen leaves. That's why fall cleanup is such an important factor in limiting the disease. Humid, warm daytime temperatures, combined with cool nights create perfect conditions for dormant spores to activate. Unlike many other fungal diseases, these spores do not need moisture to germinate. Adding to the challenge for gardeners is the fact that even with strict attention to garden cleanup, spores can travel miles on winds to infect healthy plants.

Some varieties of peonies may be more or less susceptible to powdery mildew, but actual research in this area is lacking.

There are some things that can be done to reduce the incidence of powdery mildew in the garden. Keeping good air circulation around susceptible plants can help. Making sunlight more available, reducing overhead watering, watering early in the day instead of the evening and not handling plants when they are wet can limit the disease. Over fertilizing may cause tender growth, which can be more easily infected. Early removal of infected leaves or stems may be helpful, but take care not to spread the problem on infected gloves, hands or tools. Disinfect with alcohol.

Fungicides, both manmade and natural, can be effective, but usually only as a preventative. Some may have limited ability to cure an infected plant, but the science isn't clear and some are not practical or safe for use by non-professionals.

Among the most common manmade, readily-available fungicides that may help prevent infection are mancozeb, maneb and cholothalonil. Organic fungicides such as copper-based or potassium bicarbonate-based products and bio-fungicides containing *Bacillus subtilis* can also be effective. Others swear by a homemade concoction of a tablespoon each of baking soda, horticultural oil or canola oil and liquid dish soap in a gallon of water. The fungicides whether purchased or homemade should be applied early in the growth cycle and every 10-14 days up to first bloom and at least one application after bloom. Note that some may stain the blooms on flowering plants.

Another option is to do nothing. Powdery mildew is seldom an every-year problem in well cared for gardens. And, in the case of peony plants that become more hidden from view after flowering by later blooming plants, dealing with powdery mildew may simply not be worth the effort.

Membership Info

We currently have 118 active members. There are 20 members whose memberships expired at the end of 2019 that have not renewed yet this year. 1 new member joined us this quarter - Welcome Jennifer to our world of peonies! We are so happy to have you join us! We look forward to meeting you - whenever we can get together again with this Covid pandemic!

If you're unsure when your membership will expire you can send me an email at Peony-lover@hotmail.com and I'll let you know. Dues are \$5 for one year or \$10 for 3 years. Maybe you have a friend who would like to join also? I've learned so much about peonies over the years just by going to our meetings!

You can renew online at our website - "wipeonysociety.org". Just click the "Membership" button and choose your method of payment.



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