

Wisconsin Peony Society

www.wipeonysociety.org



Photo by Tracey Nelson

President's Message

Michelle Ovans, President – wipeonysociety.president@gmail.com

As I look back at this year's blooming season, the verb abundance keeps coming to mind. The abundance of extreme weather patterns started this season, ranging from high temperatures early in the season to late frost and then hailstorms after the emergence of the peonies. Then we move onto the blooming season with an abundance of blooms displaying the hardiness of the peonies. The abundance of all these extremes showcases why we love this hardly and resilient plant.

Special thanks go out to the WPS Board of Directors for their ability to put together a wonderful Spring Garden Tour & Picnic at the last minute after the hailstorm destroyed over 75% of the peony foliage at Ovans Peony Farm, preventing the picnic from being held there.

The Spring Garden Tour included a look at Lloyd & Judy Ravet's special peony garden and his tables full of seedlings. We then proceeded to Rita Thomas's for a picnic lunch in her garden, followed by a wonderful educational presentation by Cory Tischman on the process of ALM (Award of Landscape Merit) trait scoring. This two-part process began in Rita's garden and continued at the Madison Ag. Research Station in their peony gardens. This gave attendees a wonderfully relaxed atmosphere to talk about our favorite things – Peonies! The lively conversations, enjoyment of the colorful blooms, and educational information to spark our curiosity on the development of awarded peonies were the perfect definition of Abundance.



Photos by Damon Smith and Sharon Schmitz

The secret ingredient in the "mocktail" served at the picnic lunch was Rhubarb. Dale Hughes guessed it and was the winner of the size medium, pink garden gloves. I think his wife Becky will enjoy them.



PBS WISCONSIN'S GARDEN & LANDSCAPE EXPO BY JERRI O'CONNOR

WE HAD AN AMAZING GARDEN EXPO THIS YEAR WITH 14,913 ATTENDEES. A HUGE THANK YOU TO LLOYD AND JUDY RAVET WHO COME IN ON THURSDAY EACH YEAR TO HELP SET UP. ALSO, OUR VOLUNTEERS, WHO PROMOTED PEONIES AND HELPED TO SELL SEEDS, DID A WONDERFUL JOB. WE COULD NOT OPERATE WITHOUT THEM. THANK YOU SO MUCH.

SUNDAY IS SLOW WITH VOLUNTEERS, SO MELISSA AND AUSTIN CHERAMY, MY DAUGHTER AND SON-IN-LAW, CAME IN TO HELP. MY SON-IN-LAW RECRUITED 3 NEW MEMBERS. IN ADDITION TO SELLING APS SEEDS, SCOTT PARKER DID HIS ROOT DIVISION DEMO AND MICHELLE OVANS GAVE 2 PRESENTATIONS.

LLOYD AND JUDY RAVET DID EXCEPTIONALLY WELL SELLING HIS OUTSTANDING ROOTED CROSSES. THEY VERY GENEROUSLY SPLIT THEIR SALES WITH WPS, AFTER THEIR EXPENSES ARE SUBTRACTED, GIVING US \$533. AFTER DEDUCTING WPS EXPENSES AND GIVING 10% TO THE ALLIANT CENTER, WPS'S PROFIT CAME TO \$260.





Thank you to all the wonderful volunteers who made the Wisconsin Peony Society well represented at the 2024 PBS Garden & Landscape Exposition.

Nate Bremer, Melissa & Austin Cheramy, Todd Hausser, Dale Hughes, Doug Kindschuh, Tracey Nelson, Scott Parker, Lloyd & Judy Ravet, Sharon Schmitz, Rita Thomas, and Pat Trapp.

Last but not least, we owe Jerri O'Connor a HUGE THANK YOU for all the work she does to make the WPS booth at the Garden Expo. possible. Reserving the booth, designing, and decorating, are largely due to her efforts. She coordinates the volunteers and spends most of the long weekend working the booth. Then tearing everything down, packing up, and hauling everything back out is another job she efficiently performs with the volunteers. Jerri, you're the best!

2024 Gold Medal Award Selection 'Dreamtime'

The American Peony Society is excited to present the 2024 Gold Medal Award winner, 'Dreamtime'. Hybridized by Bill Seidl and registered by Nate Bremer in 2013, Dreamtime has become a favorite plant in connoisseur gardens and is now seeing distribution from a number of specialty peony sources.

This herbaceous hybrid is a bright clear pink, many-petaled single to semi-double with three rows of guard petals. It has a mild, sweet fragrance with three to four smooth green carpels, and has pink stigmas. Stamens are yellow throughout. The entire flower structure is elegant and the colors of all structures complement one another.

The beautiful, healthy foliage is red in color on emergence from the ground. At full height, when in bloom, it grows to 3 to 3 ½ feet with broad, pointed, dark green foliage. It is a fast and vigorous grower that needs no support. Plants in and out of bloom are excellent garden subjects with strong and sturdy stems. Two or three side buds create an outstanding display in the garden and add extended bloom. 'Dreamtime' blooms in the early part of the mid-season period, just before Lactiflora Group cultivars. The foliage remains in fine shape throughout the season.

Parentage: 'Pink Vanguard' x 'Salmon Dream'. 'Pink Vanguard', the seed parent, is from a cross of 'Blushing Princess' x 'Salmon Dream' - giving 'Dreamtime' a double dose of 'Salmon Dream' in its pedigree. The multiple use of 'Salmon Dream' in its pedigree led to the use of the word "dream" as part of the cultivar name. The plant is of interest to the hybridizer as both a pollen and seed parent, imparting vigorous growth and ornate flowers to its offspring. 'Dreamtime' is a prolific seeder and has extremely fertile pollen, making it an easy parent in crosses with compatible partners. Another great peony from the legendary hybridizer Bill Seidl, 'Dreamtime' is suitable for home gardeners, cut flower growers and peony hybridizers. This reliable blooming plant is sure to please!



Donation

Donation made to West Madison Ag. Research Station; \$1,500 from 2023 and the board voted to make it \$3,000 for 2024.

Janet from West Madison Ag Research Station had this to say:

"Wow, you just knocked my socks off! What a great email to receive. Really grateful for this donation. It will surely help support the display gardens. Thank you, thank you WPS!"



2024 APS Peony Convention Bloomington, Minnesota

Michelle Ovans, President

As Mother Nature blessed us with an abundance of peonies during this blooming season, we reflect on the moments of bliss as WPS members discover hundreds of varieties on display at this year's National Flower Show in Minnesota. Two of which came from one of our members, Scott Parker, and were awarded a Certificate of Merit: Sharon's Blush, with qualities perfect for a bride's bouquet, and Alice's Plum, with a pleasing fragrance like apples and a deep red coloration.

We invite you to discover kinship and joy as we embark on the planning process for the American Peony Society Convention that will be held in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, for the 2025 National Flower Show. Volunteers will be needed for this highly recognized event. You are encouraged to participate by opening your fabulous gardens to visitors and entering your beautiful peony blooms into the show! The convention will be held June 11-15, 2025, with the National Flower Show open to the public on Saturday, June 14 & Sunday, June 15th. Because the dates coincide with the Wisconsin Arts & Peony Festival, we are expecting a record number of visitors to the flower show. Contact Michelle Ovans @ ovanspeonyfarm@yahoo.com to let us know how you can help make this upcoming convention fabulous.





To All WPS Members

Please, we are in need of a Vice-President. I promise, you will have a wonderful board to work with. For more information, please contact any current board member, or Michelle Ovans, our current President, at wipeonysociety.president@gmail.com



Ice Age - photo by Rita Thomas

A Note from the University of Michigan on Genetic Peony Research.

Greetings WPS Members,

As you may recall, the Wisconsin Peony Society made a very generous donation to the University of Michigan for genetic peony research.

We received a link from researchers Nastassia Vlasava and David Michener asking us to share it with all donors from the American, Minnesota, and Wisconsin Peony Societies. David and Nastassia are hoping to get the research article out to as many people as possible and to get comments or feedback.

They also thank you once again for your kind support.

Website: <https://www.mdpi.com/1999-4915/16/6/893>

Cory Tischman

Vice President & Board Member APS

Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Rosendale Historical Society

Emajean Westphal, President of Rosendale Historical Society.

Rosendale Historical Society was most grateful to the WPS for the help that you gave us in the work we had to do to restore our windmill in Sissons Peony Gardens. Wilbur Sisson started his peony garden in 1919 next to his sister's house. In 1929 he hired Jess Phillips to build a windmill using the stones from the foundation of the Methodist Church, which had been moved. This is the same windmill that stands in the Gardens today. The Rosendale Historical Society took over the remaining ½ acre of the original 5-acre garden in 2005, and it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2007.

We became aware that the mortar between the stones was deteriorating. We had already replaced the original blades and decorations on the windmill roof in 2008. The other concern that we had was a very large soft Maple tree next to the fence that was dangerously leaning towards the windmill. We were able to get the neighbor's tree removed at our expense. Then, in the fall of 2022, we hired a mason to tuckpoint the windmill inside and out. We hope that this will last for as many years as it had originally. The money that you gave us helped us accomplish this.



Come Play in the Peonies

by Michelle Ovans, President

I have found that growing peonies has been a great way to engage with youngsters within our community. Many have never had the opportunity to grow any plants from seeds or see flowers being grown for the floral industry. It's been personally rewarding to watch the growth of these young women as they "Play in the Peonies" with me. Four years ago, McKenna started helping me grow cut flowers from seed. She loved putting the seeds in trays and caring for the seedlings as they sprouted, but when it came time to plant, she realized that she didn't like the bugs outside. She told me that she realized that she is an inside kind of person. McKenna quickly became aware that she loved helping design peony floral crowns or wearable flowers, and was a great help within the gift shop. Now McKenna is attending college to become a nurse with a love for peonies.

A couple of sisters, Derain and Claire, have been the latest young helpers in the peonies. Derain loves working in the gift shop and assembling floral bouquets for visiting guests. She has an eye for design and is excellent at product displays. Claire, on the other hand, has already decided that she wants to be a botanist and hybridize peonies. She has read every book provided on peonies, and can almost recite them from memory. She is very excited to incorporate Lloyd Ravet's window box of peony seedlings into her high school research project.



Spring Meeting 2024

by Rita Thomas

Our spring meeting was held on March 16, 2024 with Gerriane Holzman, National Flower Show Judge, displaying some of her gorgeous, award-winning, floral designs. Her creativity opened our eyes to looking beyond simple vases and flowers. The importance of creating a balance using color, forms, and size all go into making a pleasing picture. Create a theme knotting stems, twisting metal, adding flowing strands of pearls; there is no limit to what one can use. Attendees will no doubt use the techniques we learned the next time we create a floral design.





Guest Garden Program

If you were a lucky recipient of a peony from the Guest Garden Program, it will be available at the peony root auction October 5, 2024

For details on how the program works, click on this link:

<https://wipeonysociety.org/guest-gardener-program/>

This years peonies are:

Eternal Love

Edgar Jessup

Fairy's Petticoat

Heartbreaker

Kristin Joy

Lady Orchid

Sixteen Candles





The Award of Landscape Merit (ALM)
by Cory Tischman,
ALM Committee Chairperson

There are two major awards that are bestowed to peony cultivars – one is the Gold Medal Award, and the other is The Award of Landscape Merit (ALM). The ALM was developed to seek out and bestow recognition for named peony cultivars that specifically have superior ornamental value in the landscape throughout the growing season and can perform reliably throughout different growing conditions. These are peonies that are self-supporting, are reliable for their flowering display, and importantly, as a bush, provide nice foliage throughout the year.

Some of my favorite ALM winners that I recommend to anyone: 'Bartzella,' 'Burma Ruby,' 'Etched Salmon,' 'May Lilac,' and 'Rozella.'

The American Peony Society is solely a volunteer organization, just like the WPS, but on a larger scale, though we still run into the issue of always needing more volunteers. And because the APS is a volunteer-based organization, and people's lives change, the ALM has been in a “dormant” stage these past few years

Excitingly, there has been renewed interest in this program, and with that, a number of changes to hopefully streamline the process to make it easier to judge and score, and give recognition to some outstanding cultivars.

There are close to 7500 registered cultivars on the APS register, with more being registered each year, and in order to give the ALM to any cultivar we need to

have enough judges each year observing the cultivar in order to get a representative sample in different growing conditions. This is in order to avoid a bias to one particular growing zone and/or climate. There are many cultivars that are likely deserving of this award but we need members like you to help us out.

The great thing about this program is that you don't need to personally grow any of cultivars that are on the list to be observed. If you have a friend who is growing a cultivar or maybe you are close to a botanical or reference garden, like some of the cultivars at the West Madison Agricultural Research Station where the WPS has their meeting, that would also be an option. We are currently working on creating a list of different types of reference gardens and will be hopefully releasing that in the near future. So, to be clear, even if you have only one cultivar you can judge, that's great!

Additionally, we had to make changes to the ALM program to accommodate our volunteer judges. We created a three year cycle where five to six cultivars will be judged and afterwards the winners will be announced the following year, so regrettably, there are no winners for 2024, and the next winner(s) will be announced in 2026. Here are the five cultivars that are being observed for the 2023-2025 judging cycle: 'Amalia Olson', 'Blushing Princess', 'Mandarin's Coat', 'Royal Tot', and 'Shawnee Chief'.

We also have prepared a list of the upcoming peonies that will be judged for the 2026-2028 judging cycle if you want to locate them now so they can be old enough to be judged during that time as they need to be grown in that spot for at least three years to be validly observed. Here are the following cultivars for the 2026-2028 judging: 'Dreamtime', 'Fairy Princess', 'Jan Van Leeuwen', 'Topeka Coral', 'Topeka Statue', and 'Tranquil Dove'.

More information on the list of cultivar candidates can be found on the APS website's home page if you click 'Learn', then 'Awards', and under the 'Landscape of Merit' section you will see the 'Additional Resources' at the bottom of the page, and there will be the document, "Award of Landscape Merit Cultivar Scoring Schedule".

If you are interested in becoming a judge or know more about the ALM program, please contact us at ALM@americanpeonysociety.org – We are working on creating a larger training program in order to allow more people to participate in the process that is still in the works. We will be having an ALM judge's training at the upcoming APS Convention in Bloomington, MN June 5 to June 9, 2024. If you are attending the convention and want to attend this training, please sign up using the email address above. Looking forward to seeing you there!





Calendar of Events

October 5, 2024 – Fall Root Auction and Business Meeting

10:30 A.M. check-in, auction registration

11:00 A.M. business meeting and lunch

12:00 P.M. auction

Spring 2025 American Peony Society Convention

June 11-15, 2025 Beaver Dam. Wisconsin National Flower Show open to the public on Saturday June 14 & Sunday June 15th.

2024 Annual Root Auction Saturday, October 5

It's time to start looking ahead to our annual fall peony root auction. With more and more commercial growers closing or cutting back operations, we depend even more on individual members to provide the plants that keep our auction going.

We ask our members to look around their gardens for plants that can be divided, moved, or perhaps even removed entirely to make room for something better. It doesn't matter if you can only spare a single division of something common or if you're donating 20 rare varieties - your donation will help pay for important Society activities like the Garden Expo booth, informational meetings and workshops, and the support we give to good causes like the Sisson Garden, the West Madison Agricultural Research Station, and the Peony DNA project.

Along with the satisfaction of supporting the society and its programs, any member who donates 4 or more plants will get 10 Peony Bucks.

The auction will be open to the public, so bring your friends, relatives, and other peony lovers for an afternoon of fun.

Please contact Tracey Nelson (tcnelson19@gmail.com, tel. 608-205-9789), Scott Parker (oldtooltrader@centurytel.net, tel. 608-378-4778), or Damon Smith (damonsmith56@hotmail.com, tel. 608-335-0336) by September 15 to let us know what you'll be bringing so that we can find pictures, produce the auction list, and PowerPoint presentation. If you need help digging your roots, let us know as early as you can and we'll do our best to find someone to help you with that.

Meeting Timetable:

10:30 A.M. check-in, auction registration

11:00 A.M. business meeting and lunch

12:00 P.M. auction

Membership Report

Sharon Schmitz, Membership
Coordinator

We now have 110 members. Six new members enrolled this spring. And, just a reminder, if you'd like to participate in the Guest Garden Program, your membership must be paid up until 2028. If you're unsure when your membership expires, just send me an email at peony_lover@hotmail.com and I'll check for you.

Board Members

President: Michelle Ovans
Vice President: Vacant position
Treasurer: Laura Cutsforth
Recording Secretary: Damon Smith
Membership: Sharon Schmitz
Newsletter Editor: Rita Thomas
Director-At-Large: Jerri O'Connor
Director-At-Large: Scott Parker

Treasurer's Report

Laura Cutsforth, Treasurer

6/30/2024

Checking 3,364.10

Savings 10,477.17

Cash 306.00

TOTAL. \$14,147.27



A Jerri O'Connor seedling