

# 2025 WINTER NEWSLETTER

Rita Thomas,, editor  
All photos by Rita Thomas unless otherwise noted

## Wisconsin Peony Society

[www.wipeonysociety.org](http://www.wipeonysociety.org)



### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Scott Parker

I would like to start my term by expressing my sincere gratitude to Michelle Ovans, the outgoing president of WPS, for her unwavering dedication during her tenure. I also want to extend my appreciation to her husband, Michael, for all the time and effort he put into making the 2025 APS Convention a memorable experience. The remarkable attendance at the APS flower show is a testament to that success.



I would also like to express my gratitude to all the WPS members and the peony vendors for their generous contributions to WPS's 2025 fall peony root auction, where over 100 items were auctioned off. Additionally, I want to thank everyone who contributed their time and effort to make the auction a tremendous success.

WPS's next event will be our booth at the Garden Expo, taking place at the Exhibition Hall of the Alliant Energy Center in Madison, from Friday to Sunday, February 13-15. I encourage many of our members to volunteer and assist at the booth. If you're interested in helping out at the WPS booth during the Garden Expo, please reach out to Jerri O'Connor at [jerri.oconnor@gmail.com](mailto:jerri.oconnor@gmail.com) to sign up.



I am excited to announce that our Spring Garden Tour will be held at Solaris Farms on June 6, 2026. As Solaris Farms is no longer open to the public, Nate Bremer is generously hosting us for an exclusive tour and lunch. I would like to thank Nate and his wife for this incredible opportunity. This is a one-time event that you won't want to miss.

**\*\*Note:\*\***

Attendance is limited to WPS members. Memberships may be purchased at any time for only \$5 a year. Click on this link for a membership application: [Wisconsin Peony Society - Membership](#).

Further details regarding the time and specifics of the tour and lunch will be shared in a future communication and posted on the WPS website."

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## Calendar of Events

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### Garden and Green Living Expo PBS Wisconsin 2026 Feb 13-15

Coming in 2026: Michelle Ovans, former WPS president and noted peony grower, will speak at the Garden and Green Living Expo. Details are on the way. Look for an email or follow on Facebook for the latest news.



Photo curtesy of M. Ovans



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## March Meeting

Saturday March 28, 2026

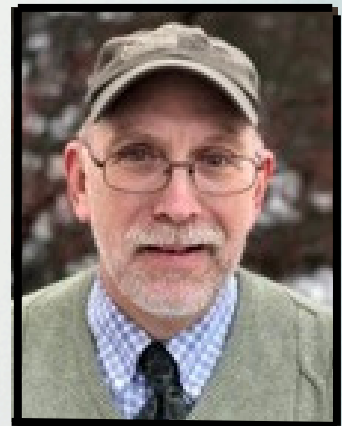
West Madison Agriculture Research Station

12:00 – 1 P.M. Social and lunch

1:00 - end Speaker Brian Hudelson, aka Dr.  
Death.

Brian Hudelson is affectionately known as “Dr. Death” because of his love of plant diseases. Brian received his BS in Botany, Bacteriology and Molecular Biology, MS in Biometry and PhD in Plant Pathology from the UW-Madison, and in 1998, became the director of the Plant Disease Diagnostics Clinic. For more information click here:

<https://pddc.wisc.edu/clinic-staff-2/>



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### Spring Garden Tour

Sat. June 6, 2026

**Solaris Farms**

7510 Pinesva Rd,

Reedsville, WI 54230

Sorry, members only.

(Join anytime, only \$5  
year.)

### Future APS Conventions

2026 Greater Philadelphia  
area May 2 - 5

2027 Swinomish Wa.  
June 2 - 5



# Peony Dig for the 2025 Auction

An inside look at one of the digs for the auction. This was at Sharon Schmitz's garden with helpers Scott Parker, Mark Miles, and Rita Thomas wrestling those monsters out of the ground.





# WPS Peony Auction

## Saturday October 4, 2025

by Rita Thomas

Lot #	Auction Item	Type	Donated By	
1	Pink Vanguard	Hybrid	Sevald Nursery	\$22.50
2	He's My Star	p. lactiflora	Jeri O'Connor	27.50
3	Mahogany	Hybrid	Beatrice Olsen	32.50
4	Reine Rubies	Hybrid	Edwin Frazier	22.50
5	Avantache	p. lactiflora	Adelman Peony Gardens	35
6	Coral Sunset	Hybrid	Adelman Peony Gardens	30
7	Bartella	Itch	Adelman Peony Gardens	32.50
8	Mr. G.F. Hemerik	p. lactiflora	Solaris Farms	25
9	Miss. Frank Beach	p. lactiflora	Solaris Farms	25
10	Gay Paree	p. lactiflora	Solaris Farms	37.50
11	Vesuvian	Lutea Hybrid	Solaris Farms	75
12	Pink Vanguard	Hybrid	Bob Rolander	22.50
13	Pink Vanguard	Hybrid	Bob Rolander	20
14	Kansas	p. lactiflora	Bob Rolander	30
15	Juliska	Hybrid	Bob Rolander	45
16	Pink Tinkerbell	p. lactiflora	Jane Plainwell	25
17	Cheerful Glow	Lutea Hybrid	Adelman Peony Gardens	65
18	High Adventure	p. lactiflora	Adelman Peony Gardens	35
19	p. anomala sub. species veltchiana	species peony	Solaris Farms	45
20	Avis Varner	p. lactiflora	Solaris Farms	25
21	The Mackinac Grand	Hybrid	Solaris Farms	50
22	Henry Sass	p. lactiflora	Solaris Farms	27.50
23	The Mackinac Grand	Hybrid	Bob Rolander	50
24	The Mackinac Grand	Hybrid	Bob Rolander	40
25	Dreamtime	Hybrid	Bob Rolander	47.50
26	Dreamtime	Hybrid	Bob Rolander	47.50
27	Lemon Chiffon	Hybrid	Bob Rolander	42.50
28	Lemon Chiffon	Hybrid	Bob Rolander	50
29	Lemon Chiffon	Hybrid	Bob Rolander	50
30	Europa	Hybrid	Bob Rolander	250
31	Julia Rose (unregistered)	Itch	Adelman Peony Gardens	32.50
32	Little Corporal	Hybrid	Adelman Peony Gardens	30
33	3 Tree Peony Seedlings	p. suffruticosa	Sarah Tseng	30
34	NO ID - Grafted Tree Peony	p. suffruticosa	Sarah Tseng	35
35	NO ID - Grafted Tree Peony	p. suffruticosa	Sarah Tseng	32.50
36	Valentine	p. lactiflora	Parker's Peony & Perennial Farm	27.50
37	Manitowoc Maiden	Hybrid	Bob Rolander	102.50
38	Manitowoc Maiden	Hybrid	Bob Rolander	11
39	Manitowoc Maiden	Hybrid	Bob Rolander	11
40	Gordon E. Simonson	Itch	Bob Rolander	80
41	Zelda	p. lactiflora	Beatrice Olsen	37.50
42	Sharon's Blush	p. lactiflora	Jane Plainwell	125
43	Leda	Lutea Hybrid	Rita Thomas	95
44	Luxor	p. lactiflora	Adelman Peony Gardens	37.50
45	Pastellegance	Hybrid	Adelman Peony Gardens	105
46	Dreamtime	Hybrid	Bob Rolander	57.50

More than 100 items were generously donated by WPS members and affiliated businesses for the 2025 auction, contributing to its great success. The quality of these contributions were not run-of-the-mill standards seen in retail stores or even garden centers, but high quality hybrids, such as the Mackinac Grand, Manitowoc Maiden and Lemon Chiffon. With a diverse price range, there was something for everyone, providing a significant boost to WPS's financial standing.

Scott's extensive knowledge of the peonies growth habits, their performance in Wisconsin gardens, and the hybridizer, assisted bidders in determining the value of adding these plants to their collections.

The auction atmosphere was vibrant, yet it allowed sufficient time to ensure no bid was missed.

Here are two of the auction sheets, offering a fairly accurate list of the prices paid. Apologies for any disarray, but all the essential information, including the donors name, is included.

47	Dreamtime	Hybrid	Bob Rolander	
48	Dreamtime	Hybrid	Bob Rolander	
49	Pastelorama	Hybrid	Bob Rolander	80
50	Quintessence	Hybrid	David Cartwright	47.50 x2
51	Schopenhauer	Hybrid	Solaris Farms	50
52	Solara	Hybrid	Solaris Farms	32.50
53	Joker	Hybrid	Solaris Farms	45
54	Hillary	Itch	Solaris Farms	45
55	Leda	Lutea Hybrid	Rita Thomas	85
56	Coral Charm	Hybrid	Rita Thomas	25
57	Coral Charm	Hybrid	Rita Thomas	25
58	Lavender	Hybrid	Rita Thomas	42.50
59	June Brilliant	p. lactiflora	Robert Taylor	25
60	Little Darlin'	Itch	Robert Taylor	20
61	James Pillow	p. lactiflora	David & Linette Sorrentino	35
62	Lillian Wild	p. lactiflora	David & Linette Sorrentino	32.50
63	Nick Shaylor	p. lactiflora	David & Linette Sorrentino	27.50
64	White Ivory	p. lactiflora	David & Linette Sorrentino	27.50
65	Sequestered Sunshine	Itch	Edwin Frazier	50
66	Red Grace	Hybrid	Beatrice Olsen	52.50
67	Don Richardson	p. lactiflora	Robert Taylor	32.50
68	Chestine Gowdy	p. lactiflora	Sevald Nursery	27.50
69	Elsie Pickett	p. lactiflora	Sevald Nursery	35
70	Alerte (unregistered)	p. lactiflora	Sevald Nursery	25
71	Sarah Bernhardt	p. lactiflora	Betty Dalke	20
72	Sarah Bernhardt	p. lactiflora	Betty Dalke	20
73	Westerner	p. lactiflora	Sharon Schmitz	35
74	Westerner	p. lactiflora	Sharon Schmitz	30
75	Candy Stripe	p. lactiflora	Robert Taylor	27.50
76	\$50.00 Gift Certificate	Hybrid	Hidden Springs Flower Farm	25
77	Bob	Hybrid	Guest Garden Program	80
78	Early Scout	Hybrid	Rita Thomas	25
79	Early Scout	Hybrid	Rita Thomas	25
80	Leda	Lutea Hybrid	Rita Thomas	75
81	\$50.00 Gift Certificate	Hybrid	Hidden Springs Flower Farm	15
82	Manitowoc Maiden	Hybrid	Tracey Nelson	80 - 80
83	Shirley Temple	p. lactiflora	Sharon Schmitz	27.50
84	Shirley Temple	p. lactiflora	Sharon Schmitz	22.50
85	Pastel Splendor	Itch	Lloyd & Judy Ravet	45
86	\$50.00 Gift Certificate	Hybrid	Hidden Springs Flower Farm	15
87	Strawberry Ripple	p. lactiflora	Sharon Schmitz	25
88	Strawberry Ripple	p. lactiflora	Sharon Schmitz	25
89	Several Tree Peony Seedling	p. rockii	Lloyd & Judy Ravet	125 - 85
90	Class Act	p. lactiflora	WPS - West Ag. Gardens	40
91	Ursa Major	p. lactiflora	WPS - West Ag. Gardens	40
92	Ursa Major	p. lactiflora	WPS - West Ag. Gardens	40
93	Wilford Johnson	p. lactiflora	WPS - West Ag. Gardens	35



# 2025 WPS Auction by the Numbers

by Damon Smith and Carrie Czerwonka

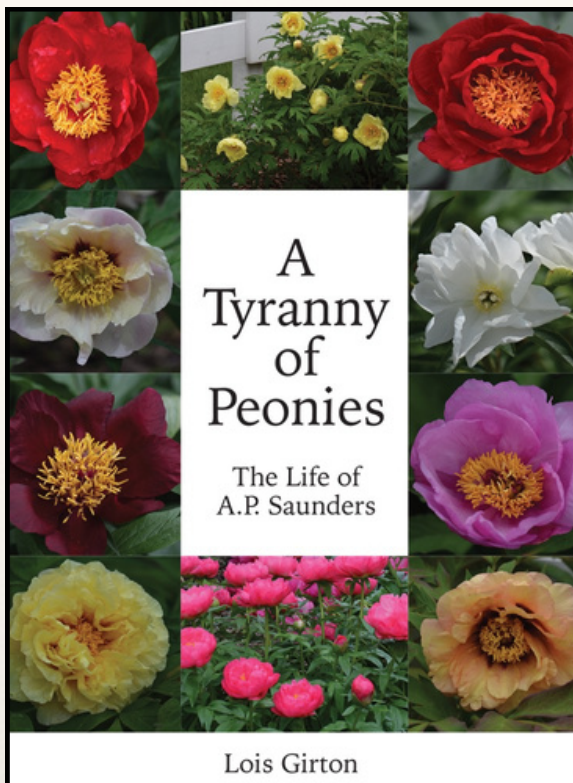
The Wisconsin Peony Society October 2025 root auction sold 115 roots, 3 gift certificates, and 4 books.

The gross auction receipts came to \$5,767.50; out of that came \$445 in Peony Bucks, and \$105.32 in credit card fees (on \$2,957.50 in credit card sales). Our net receipts were \$5,217.18.

The average selling price per peony was \$49.67, but ten roots sold for over \$100, three for \$200 and up, and the most paid for a peony at the auction was \$250.



Peony roots ready for the auction



There were 28 registrants, of whom 23 bought at least one peony. Lois Girton, APS President, donated 14 of her books to sell for WPS profit. The book, *A Tyranny of Peonies*, tracks A. Percy Saunders' peony introductions, his fascinating life, and his contributions to our present day peony forms and seasons. Four books were sold at this auction, and the rest will be available at the Garden Expo in February.

A special thank you to all who donated and attended.



# Getting To Know Your WPS Board Member: Sharon Schmitz

Interview by Tracey Nelson

Q: How did you first get interested in peonies?

A: We went for a Sunday afternoon drive and stumbled upon the Brand Peony Farm. They had a display; we went in, and I fell in love, and bought my first 4 peonies in 1976. I planted them in the ditch by my culvert! They thrived! I was lucky; my land was all sand.

Q: Do you remember when you began growing peonies? What was the first peony you grew?

A: The first four peonies that I grew in 1976 were Myra MacRae, Mons Jules Elie, Westerner, and SeaShell.

Q: If you had to choose 5 peonies to grow in your garden, the ones you couldn't give up, which ones would they be, and why would you choose them?

A: Only 5? 🤔 There's so many special ones! I had a tough time!

Myra MacRae - Love her color, she's huge, and really makes a statement! And they last forever in the house.

Petticoat Flounce - Love her colors and her forms; I especially love that the side buds always bloom as a totally different flower form. (see picture)

Etched Salmon - The color! And the form!

Moonstone - Her fragrance and perfect form.

Flying Pink Saucers - So awesome! So tall and distinctive and floriferous.

Orchid Annie - Her color and her style is like no other, mesmerizing.

Sharon's Blush - Her color and her form (haven't seen her on the bush yet, but I'm sure she's spectacular!)

Pink Cuddles - She's a beautiful pink double in miniature, so cute!

Wisconsin Cream - The perfect white bomb.

Cora Stubbs - Love her form and color and watching her as she ages.

Q: You have participated in many APS Shows over the years. What is your favorite part of the show? What is your favorite memory from a show you have attended?

A: The flower show itself! It's always just breathtaking to see so many peonies in one place. I always add way too many to my wish list.

Favorite memory - visiting Hans Hansen's garden! WOW!!!! So many treasures in one place!!! There were so many new peonies and hostas that I had never even dreamed of!

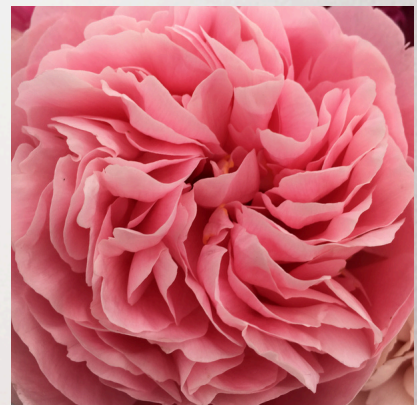
Photos curtesy of Sharon Schmitz



Myra MacRae



Petticoat Flounce



Etched Salmon



Moonstone



Q: Of the APS shows you've attended, which was your favorite and why?

A: That would have to be the one in Ann Arbor, Michigan a couple years ago. Visiting the Matthaei Botanical Gardens was unbelievable! So many beautiful peonies in one garden, all well labeled. It was just breathtaking! Peony paradise!!!

Q: If you had the opportunity to meet any peony hybridizer of the past, who would it be and why?

A: He's still hybridizing I think, but Roy Klehm because he's hybridized so many of my favorites. I'd like to see what he's been working on and I'd like to thank him for all the great peonies he's introduced and for adding so much beauty to our world and also, very importantly, for all the contributions he's made to the peony world!

Q: Are there any peonies on your "most wanted" list?

A: Kim and Mabel L. Gore and a couple of seedlings from the 2025 APS Convention. I'm trying to cut back.

Q: You are one of the founding members of WPS. How did you become involved in the early stages of the organization?

A: I was a member of the MPS at the time, and I knew that I would be moving to Wisconsin someday. So when Scott started the WPS, I came over and attended the first meeting. We were a small group and I think I volunteered to be the secretary and maybe do memberships as well since I had done both those positions for the MPS several times. I also used to record the auction bids manually on a spreadsheet before David made that wonderful program. That was crazy!

Q: You volunteer for WPS as a current board member as Membership Director and Peony Bucks Coordinator. What do you enjoy about your level of involvement in WPS in your current roles?

A: Meeting all the wonderful fellow peony lovers and making so many wonderful new friends.

Q: If you were to give a WPS member advice about becoming more involved in the organization and its benefits, what would that advice be?

A: Just by being involved and helping out, you will learn so much more about peonies, and you will meet so many wonderful people and probably a new friend or two!



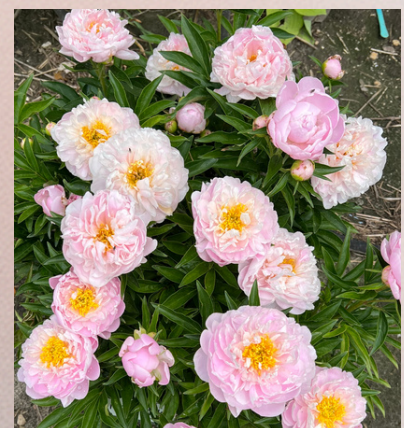
Flying Pink Saucers



Orchid Annie



Sharon's Blush



Pink Cuddles



If you have anything else you'd like to add about your peony story, please share it here.

In the 80's when I was just getting started, my neighbor and I wanted Coral Sunset badly but it was \$35. So, we purchased one and very carefully cut it in half. It lives today!

I got to meet Greta Kessenich and help her out as APS Secretary and Treasurer when she was ill at the age of 94ish. She had Floyd Kimball (past APS President) give me some peony roots as a reward. Floyd was known for his thumb-sized roots, but they grew just fine and are great performers in my garden today. Then when she passed, Linette arranged for us to dig peonies out of her garden; it was 95 degrees and 100% humidity - in early May or June, but I got Sunny Boy & Summer Glow and they lived. Nothing was labeled or in bloom. I was very lucky!



Cora Stubbs

It's been just great meeting and getting to know so many wonderful peony people going way back to the 80's.

I lived in the Twin Cities before moving to Wisconsin 9 years ago. It took me 10 years to move my 300 peonies and 250 hostas to Wisconsin, but I couldn't live without them!

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## American Peony Society

[Captivated by peonies?](#)  
[Click here for a membership form.](#)

### Individual membership

1 year	\$30.00
3 years	\$70.00
5 Years	\$115.00



# BEST GARDENING PRACTICES FOR SHARING PEONIES

BY SHARON SCHMITZ AND RITA THOMAS

To prevent the spread of diseases and pests, it is important to follow appropriate gardening practices when preparing peonies for sharing. In the following article, the technique used by one of our valued members, Sharon Schmitz, is outlined.



After carefully excavating the roots and performing an initial separation, I wash them thoroughly yet gently, making sure to avoid the new eyes to prevent washing them away.

Next, I begin to divide the roots into individual sections, washing them as I go since there's quite a bit of dirt trapped between them. I also clean out any empty holes that may have formed as the peony aged. Occasionally, I encounter worms that have burrowed deep within the roots. I continue washing until no dirt remains visible.



After I have divided all the roots, making sure that each division can support its number of eyes, I spray them with rubbing alcohol. After the alcohol has evaporated, I store them in peat moss until they are ready to be given away.

One helpful tip I've discovered for dividing the roots is to leave all the leaves intact for a day. The leaves draw moisture from the roots, making them supple and much easier to separate. I trim the leaves just before I start washing.

This method takes me approximately 2 hours per plant. I use a significant amount of water.



# Peony Division

## Notes from Scott Parker's Root Division Demonstration

by Carrie Czerwonka

WPS President Scott Parker demonstrated root cutting on a hybrid root and a non-hybrid lactiflora root at our fall auction. Some notes I jotted down follow. If you haven't yet seen this demonstration, I highly recommend it! First, why would you want to dig up a peony root and divide it? Well, to share or propagate is a primary reason. Leave the stems and leaves on. This will draw some moisture from the roots making them more pliable and easier to divide. When dividing, we cut out any rotten parts so only strong, healthy roots remain, and new roots can then grow. "Wash the soil off from bottom to top to avoid damage to the fragile eyes. Aim for three to five eyes per division. These eyes are buds for next year's stems, leaves, and flowers. Hybrids will have more difficulty finding 3 eyes near each other, so will have fewer cuttings compared with a lactiflora. Hybrids have "big sausage roots," that's how you can usually identify them. A lactiflora will have finer roots and will likely also have more eyes allowing for more divisions. Always clean tools between peonies (Lysol wipes are an excellent option) and use bypass (not anvil) pruners for a clean cut. What's "normal" for Scott? 4 divisions in 4 years per root. Digging up every 3 to 5 yrs is normal for production. 'Sharon's Blush' peony has many divisions. Not a hybrid, and tiny roots so more divisions are possible on this variety.

Make the hybrid roots look "like hands" by cutting off some of the excess sausage root, balancing the remaining root with the number of eyes. Cutting back the storage roots (the big fat ones) creates room for the fine feeder root growth. The speed of growth differs by variety. For example, "'Lorelei' is slow as dirt."

"Liners" are straight roots with only a single eye. Not salable, but a grower would put it back into the field to grow for future use. When digging the planting hole, wood bark can be mixed into soil to aid drainage. Pro tip: throw an extra tag in the hole so you always know what it is. Thank you for your valuable notes, Scott!



Photo by Carrie Czerwonka



# WHAT ARE ADVENTITIOUS SHOOTS IN PEONIES?

by Rita Thomas

In peonies, an adventitious roots refers to a new shoot that arises from a "blind" root, which lacks obvious vegetative buds or crown tissue. This type of growth is quite unusual, as new stems typically emerge from the crown, the junction where the main root system connects with the stems.

While it's possible for root fragments to sprout new stems, this phenomenon, known as an adventitious stem, is primarily observed in certain hybrids and is not a common trait among all peony roots.

This unique ability enables specific peony varieties to regenerate from detached root fragments left in the soil, resulting in unexpected new plants sprouting.

Not all peony varieties can produce adventitious stems; this characteristic is primarily found in some herbaceous hybrids, particularly those with *P. officinalis* or *P. peregrina* in their lineage.

The widely known *P. lactiflora* cultivars, or Chinese peonies, generally do not generate adventitious stems from blind roots. This is why they are often utilized as "nurse roots" for grafting tree peonies.



When woody (tree) peonies are grafted onto a herbaceous nurse root with adventitious capabilities, the nurse root may sometimes produce its own stems as shown in the photo.. Note the different leaf forms. If allowed to grow unchecked, these adventitious stems can overshadow the woody peony.

The adventitious trait presents both advantages and challenges for gardeners and propagators. While it can be beneficial for propagation, it may also lead to issues if an old peony root remains in the soil and later emerges as an unwanted plant. Some "coral" colored peonies are particularly noted for their vigorous adventitious growth.

Here is an American Peony Society link which features a list of peonies and their known adventitious properties: [Adventitious Peony Observations.](#)

Coral Charm has adventitious roots





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## TREASURER'S REPORT

HELEN FINAZZO

\$

**Checking Balance 7/01/2025****1,163.36****Income**

APS	70.00
Membership	10.00
Auction proceeds	2,510.50

**Total checking deposits****2,590.50****Expenses**

DFI	50.00
Walmart for APS	129.98
Rita Thomas meeting luncheon	171.65
U.W. Madison meeting room rental	60.00

**Total expenses****-411.63****Checking balance****3,342.23**

Savings balance	7,546.63
Deposits Square	2,852.18
Paypal Membership	9.16

**Savings Total****10,407.97**

Cash Box

**100.00****Total Cash Assets 10-31-25****\$13,850.20**

## MEMBERSHIP REPORT

SHARON SCHMITZ

A Lloyd Ravet seedling  
by Jerri O'Connor



We're growing! Our membership has increased by 30 members this year, bringing our total to 122. However, 35 memberships are set to expire this year. I will be sending reminders in December and again in January to those who haven't renewed yet. If you'd like to find out whether it's time for you to renew, feel free to email me at [peony-lover@hotmail.com](mailto:peony-lover@hotmail.com) I'll be happy to check for you.



# PEONY BUCKS PROGRAM REPORT

This year, a total of \$545 in Peony Bucks was awarded, a notable increase from \$370 last year. This rise is largely attributed to awarding Peony Bucks to our WPS members who volunteered at the APS Convention. A heartfelt thank you to all our wonderful volunteers! It truly took a village, and the event was spectacular! Additionally, \$445 Peony Bucks were redeemed during the auction.

## WAYS TO EARN PEONY BUCKS NEXT YEAR

If you're interested in earning Peony Bucks next year, here are several opportunities to consider:

- Serve as an active officer of the Wisconsin Peony Society.
- Act as a chairperson for a committee (e.g., Webmaster, Fall Auction, Garden Expo, Grafting Class).
- Volunteer for two or more full days at the Garden Expo.
- Present outside of regular meetings and distribute membership forms to promote the Wisconsin Peony Society (approval required from the current WPS President).
- Volunteer for one day at the Garden Expo.
- Donate four or more peonies to the WPS Fall Root Auction.
- Participate actively in the WPS Fall Root Auction committee.
- Submit an article for the WPS Newsletter.
- Volunteer at a WPS-organized peony dig.

Please note that the maximum amount that can be earned in one calendar year is \$25.

For more information click here: [WPS Peony Bucks](#)

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## WPS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Scott Parker  
Vice-President: Carrie Czerwonka  
Secretary: Damon Smith  
Treasurer: Helen Finazzo  
Membership: Sharon Schmitz  
Newsletter Editor: Rita Thomas  
Directors-At-Large: Jerri O'Connor  
and Tracey Nelson

Abalone Pearl  
Krekler, highly adventitious.

