



## Peony (*Paeonia lactiflora*)

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The peony is a spring blooming plant with very showy and fragrant blooms. Colors range from white, blush, pink and red. Peonies are slow-growing and it may take 2 - 3 years for a new plant to bloom although may live up to 30 years. Flower blooms range from single, double, semi-double or anemone shaped based on variety. They make excellent borders or accent plants in gardens or along sidewalks, fences or driveways. Peony blossoms may become quite top heavy. To avoid drooping, the plants should be staked for support. This should be done in early May before plants are too large. To promote growth, never cut more than 25% of the blossoms from a plant in a season.

There is a myth that ants are required for peony blooms to open. Ants are attracted to and feed on the sweet, sticky substance on the buds, but the bud will open with or without ants. Ants may also help to rid the plant of unwanted insects.

<b>Type</b>	Herbaceous perennial
<b>Hardiness Zone</b>	3a to 7b
<b>Sun</b>	Full sun
<b>Bloom Time</b>	May through early June
<b>Height</b>	3' - 4'
<b>Spread</b>	3'
<b>Attracts</b>	Butterflies and pollinators
<b>Additional Features</b>	Deer and rabbit resistant

### Soil and Site Recommendations

- Drainage: average to moist, well-drained conditions
- Soil pH: no particular pH although it grows best in rich soil
- Type: rich garden soil

### Planting Recommendations

- Type: container plant or rootstock buds (eyes)
- When to plant: Plant container plants in spring and rootstock in fall.
- Depth of planting: 1" - 2" below soil surface. If planted too deep or shallow, plants may not flower
- Mulching: add compost or organic matter when planting and also each spring



- Spacing: 3' - 4'
- Division/transplant tips: in the fall following a year of low production of flowers, the plant can be divided. Clumps with 3-5 eyes can be replanted with the eyes 1" below the soil surface and 3 feet between plants.

### **Maintenance**

- Watering: Average to moist conditions; do not let soil dry out during early spring bloom time.
- Fertilization: 5-10-5 fertilizer around an established plant in late fall or early spring
- Pinching/deadheading: remove dead blooms only, leaving as much foliage as possible as it provides food to the expanding roots.
- Annual maintenance: After a heavy frost in the fall, cut back to 3 inches. Remove debris.

### **Common Problems**

Disease: Fungal diseases botrytis blight or leaf blotch overwinter on the dead plant. If infected, after a killing frost in the fall, remove the plant, do not plant new peonies in the spot.

Insects: Thrips, armored scale, mealy bugs, nematodes and ants which can be controlled with neem oil, insecticidal soap, dish soap and water spray.

### **Resources**

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

<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu>

<http://www.gardening.cornell.edu>

<https://www.ag.ndsu.edu>

<https://extension.illinois.edu>

Questions or problems: What's wrong with my plant for information on garden pests and diseases:

<http://apps.extension.umn.edu/garden/diagnose/plant/>

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