

A close-up photograph of two pink peony buds. The bud on the left is larger and more open, showing multiple layers of light pink petals with darker pink edges. The bud on the right is smaller and more tightly closed. Both buds are surrounded by large, dark green, glossy leaves. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

# Current Management And Research On Cut Peonies

Dave Dowling

Ednie Flower Bulbs - Fred C. Gloeckner & Co., Inc

*If Peonies are so easy to grow,  
why isn't everyone growing them?*

# Peony Production

- USDA Growing zones 3-8. Soil pH 6.5-7
  - Daily low temperature in winter needs to fall below 40°F for at least six weeks.
- Start with quality root stock.
  - Firm roots, large root mass, visible eyes.
- Buy wholesale roots from an established supplier.
  - Domestic and imported suppliers.





# Peony Production

- Order months in advance.
  - Plan ahead to get the varieties you need.
- 2-3 eye vs 3-5 eye.
  - Time vs Expense
  - 3-5 eye should start producing a year sooner.
- Fall Planting vs Spring Planting
  - This fall is best, next spring is better than next fall.
  - No matter when they are planted, weed, feed, and water them.



# Peony Production



2-3 eye

VS

3-5 eye



# Peony Production



2-3 eye

VS



3-5 eye

# Peony Production

- Field layout and plant spacing.
  - Single rows, plants spaced 24" apart.
  - Double rows, 18" apart, plants 24" apart, staggered spacing.
- Bare ground/mulch or landscape fabric.
  - Bare ground requires weed control. Manual/chemical
  - Landscape fabric. Still need to weed the holes. Enlarge holes as the plants get larger.
- Planting
  - Plant with eyes 2" below the surface. Planted too deep and they won't bloom.
  - Southern growers: plant a little shallow so eyes are closer to the surface where it is colder in the winter. Plant on north facing slopes to reduce summer sun warming the soil.





# Peony Production

- Irrigation
  - *Very* important as plants are getting established the first season.
  - Water during summer when eyes are formed for next season.
  - Water the soil, not the foliage.
- Plant Care
  - Support is not needed. Harvest before the flowers open.
  - Disbud, or not.
    - Removing side buds when they are pea sized creates just one large flower on the stem.
    - Leaving side buds adds extra filler for bouquets. Larger side buds will usually open just as the central flower is fading.







# Peony Production

- Plant Care

- No major insect problems. Ants are OK.
- Sticky sap on buds usually washes off in rain. In a dry spring, or if grown in tunnels, sap may need to be rinsed off.
- Botrytis can be a problem in a wet spring. Proper plant spacing. Chemical control as prevention. Nothing “fixes” botrytis once it happens.
- Powdery Mildew may occur in late summer.
- Remove all plant material in the fall. Don’t compost any plant material that was diseased.





# Peony Production





# Peony Production

- **Harvesting**
  - Peonies are harvested before they open.
  - Harvest at the “marshmallow” stage when the buds are a day or two away from opening.
  - Harvest two or three times a day.
  - Pick stems only as long as needed, leave as many leaves on the plant as possible.
- **Storing**
  - Store in cooler at 35°F.
  - Store in water if selling within a week.
  - Store dry if holding longer.
  - Can store dry for several months.





# Planting Peonies

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# Peony Production

Extending the season earlier with tunnels.

- Get plants growing 3-4 weeks before plants usually sprout in your area.
  - Erect a low tunnel over existing plants that are of blooming age, to get them ready 3-4 weeks earlier.
  - Building a high tunnel over existing plants that are of blooming age.
  - Planting new plants in an existing tunnel is wasting that tunnel space for the 3-4 years it takes plants to reach full production.





# Peony Production

## Suggested Varieties

### Early Season

Charlie's White

Red Charm

Alertie (light pink)

Coral Charm

Raspberry Sundae

### Mid Season

Gardenia (white)

Mons Jules Eli (pink)

Alertie (light pink)

Duchess de Nemours (white)

Karl Rosenfield (red)

### Late Season

Red Sarah Bernhardt

Sarah Bernhardt (pink)

Ann Cousins (white)

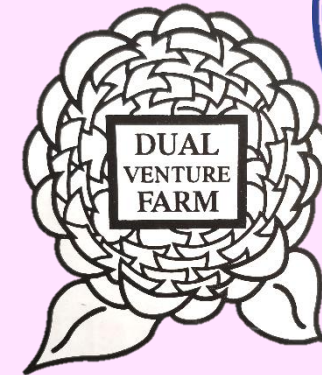
Marie Lemoine

Pink Giant

Note: The time frame from "Early" to "Late" is about 15 days.



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