

A handful of sheep manure to a plant may be given in the spring to improve the bloom. Liquid manure also may be used with discretion, for the same purpose.

Disbudding. Most varieties of peonies develop several small lateral or sidebuds near the base of the terminal bud. If large flowers are wanted, the side buds should be removed so the strength will all go into the terminal bud. The side-buds should be removed as soon as they are about the size of a pea. This is easily done by pulling them downwards and sideways with the fingers. Some people prefer leaving their side-buds which develop and prolong the blooming season. The side-buds bloom later than the terminal buds.

Insect Pests. In some sections of the country, where thrips are prevalent, some late varieties are damaged to the extent that the buds fail to open even after they are almost fully developed. Spraying or dusting, at weekly intervals should control the thrips very well. Apply first application when buds are about the size of a large marble. We like Orthene.

Why Peonies Do Not Bloom. Planted too deeply...examine and if eyes are more than 2" under ground, raise to proper height. Buds killed by late frost; attacked by thrips water logged; killed by disease. Plants too young, undernourished; undermined by moles or gophers; receive too much shade and not enough sunshine; moved and divided too often; planted too near trees and shrubs, or crowded by other plants; receiving too much nitrogen...cut down on fertilizer rich in nitrogen. Ground too dry...water down to bottom of roots. High heat — late full doubles may fail as result of excessively hot weather.

What to Expect After First Spring After Planting. After planting a standard division will make one or more stems six or more inches high. Do not be discouraged if the growth is low and only one stem appears. It may bloom and it may not. Many of the most successful growers never allow a plant to bloom the first year. The first year blooms are often not typical of the variety. It may take three years before the plant blooms true to variety.

From *Handbook of the Peony*
American Peony Society

Handbook of the Peony

Published by the American Peony Society. Contains excellent articles about how to successfully plant and grow peonies and a wealth of other information. Price \$5.00. Subject to change.

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Basic Guide to the Culture of Peonies

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Basic Guide to the Culture of Peonies

Peonies are easily grown and their requirements are few, but they respond beautifully to a little special care and attention by producing best quality flowers and many of them. With this thought in mind we offer the following suggestions gained from many years experience in growing and handling peonies.

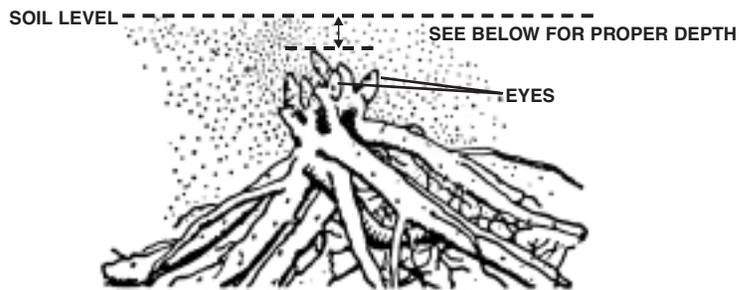
HOW TO HANDLE IF YOU CANNOT PLANT UPON ARRIVAL -- Keep the packaging material damp (not wet) and store plants in a cool location. Storage in your refrigerator vegetable box is ideal.

When to Plant. Peonies may be planted in September, October and November before the ground freezes. We prefer early October planting. Spring planting is not desirable because the plants begin their top-growth before the roots have become well established.

Where to Plant. Select a sunny, well-drained location for your peonies. They will tolerate some shade, but should have at least a half-day of sunshine. The best blooms are usually found on plants growing in full sunlight. Do not plant near large trees or heavy shrubs where they would be robbed of necessary moisture and nutrients. Plants may be spaced from two to four feet apart depending on desired effect. If you wish to develop large specimen clumps space them four feet apart. Peonies prefer a soil that tests 6.5 ph.

Never Plant Peonies Back in the Same Location unless you have first removed the soil that was around the original plant, and have replaced with new soil. Peonies will grow in one location for many, many years and do well, but once the plant has been dug, do not reset another in the same spot unless you have first removed the old soil and replaced with new. Suggest removing about 1 1/2 cubic feet of dirt.

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Caution! The depth at which the eyes are planted is extremely important. If planted too deep the peonies will not bloom! Ideal planting depth is as follows:

Location	Planting Zone (coldest winter temperature)	Depth of Eyes
Northern US	Zone 3-4 (-20° or colder)	2 inches deep
Middle US	Zone 5-6 (0° to -20°)	1 inch deep
Extreme Southern	Zone 7 and above (0° or warmer)	Just below surface

How to Plant. Dig a hole for each plant about 18 inches deep and about the same diameter. If the soil that has been removed is very heavy clay, or if it is very sandy, discard it and replace with a good garden soil. If well-rotted manure is available, put in about three inches in the bottom of the hole and pack well, then cover with soil so that the manure does not come into direct contact with the roots. Plant eyes at proper depth — see diagram. Pack soil well and water plants thoroughly immediately after planting so that the soil settles well around the roots.

Watering. During the spring months there is usually enough moisture in the ground for peony plants, but if several weeks pass without rain, give them a good watering once every two weeks. This should also be done during the dry summer months after the peonies have bloomed, to insure a good crop of flowers the following year.

Winter Protection. Newly planted peonies should be given winter protection for the first winter after planting. After the ground has frozen in fall give them a covering of straw or marsh hay about three inches deep. Do not use leaves or heavy organic matter that can pack down. This covering will protect the plants against heaving due to alternate thawing and freezing. Remove the covering very early in spring. Established plants need no winter protection whatever.

When the foliage has turned brown in the fall, after the first heavy frost, cut the plants down as near to the ground as possible, and burn all the stems and leaves as a protection against disease.

Botrytis. Botrytis is a parasitic fungi in the soil. Botrytis and other similar blights sometimes attack peonies. All parts may be affected. As the prevention and cure for all is the same, little distinction will be made between them. In early spring, the new shoots may suddenly turn black and die. The buds may turn brown and to a powdery dust. The infection may spread downward on the stem and cause it to die. It may extend down into the roots. Spores from these infected parts are carried by insects and wind to other plants. They also are carried over winter in plant debris left lying around. Leaves may develop brown spots, which spread and may kill the leaf. Damp weather and poor air circulation tend to increase these infections. Preventive measures are the effective control. In the fall, cut down the plant and clean up all stems and leaves and burn. Spray from early spring until August using Bordeaux mixtures (follow directions given for sweet potatoes).

When the stems become infected in the spring, cut them down to healthy tissue; if necessary down to root itself, burn. If leaf spot appears on a few leaves only, remove and burn. A top-dressing of sand around the crown of the plant often helps to check the blight.

Customers in the South. Can you grow peonies in the south? We would suggest only the selection of the early mid-season blooming double peonies, the Japanese and single flowering ones. The Officinalis hybrids are also good ones for growing in the southern regions. Plant your peonies with the eyes just at the ground level. Water thoroughly every two or three days during growing season. Withhold water between September 1 to October 15 to force dormancy.

Fertilizing. If your ground has been properly enriched at planting time, there will be little need for further fertilization for some years. The type of soil will determine the frequency. Porous soils lose their fertility faster than others, as it is washed out by the rain. Keep all fertilizer away from the crowns of the plants. There are no feeding roots there. Spread it over the area where the roots grow, from six to eighteen inches from the crown and thoroughly incorporate it with soil. Use it with discretion. Plants over fertilized will not bloom well. About half a handful of commercial fertilizer or one or more of bone-meal to a plant will be plenty. If manure is used, it should be well rotted and the greatest care should be taken to keep it from getting over the crowns. Many say it should never be used. Those who use commercial fertilizers should have their soil analyzed and supply the needed elements. Generally speaking 20 percent superphosphate, or a good potato fertilizer is excellent applied in the fall.

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