

Peony Planting and Care

Today's herbaceous peonies reflect decades of hybrid development. Careful selection and establishment will provide a lifetime of memorable garden beauty. Well cared for peonies will likely outlive their owners.



Bare root divisions are the best way to create a new peony planting. Bare root plants are harvested in Central Virginia weather permitting in late September through October. A three to five eye division is a common standard depending on variety. Roots & Blooms also tries to produce a limited selection of peonies for sale each spring. Only early and midseason varieties can be successfully grown in our Mid Atlantic climate (Zones 6-7). We do not grow or recommend any late season selections. Bloom on mature plants in Central Virginia takes place between mid April to mid May.

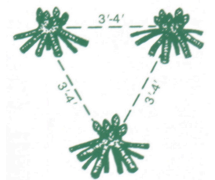
Some varieties are more vigorous than others. The general rule is three years to mature bloom or “we sleep the first year, we creep in the second and leap in the third”. Peonies are a time investment in the landscape. Do not be discouraged by first year's growth. One or more stems may reach only 6” in height with no blooms. First year flowers are not typical for most varieties. It will take time for a new root system to support foliage and flowers. Patience is a necessity during peony establishment.



Peonies prefer a sunny location and well drained soil. “Dig a dollar hole for a dime plant”. The hole should be deep and wide enough to accommodate the root system. The eyes should be no less than 2” and no greater than 3” below the soil line. Use a ruler to adjust the “top eye” on the division to the proper depth in the hole. Due to heavy Central

Virginia clay soils, we recommend mixing leaf compost or a well rotted organic matter in a one to one ratio with excavated soil as backfill around plant. If drainage is an issue, add some coarse grade builder's sand to the soil mix and add “drainage ports” away from the hole. Peonies should be used as a back drop in a mixed perennials border. Plants should be 3-4 feet apart. Use the same directions for planting potted peonies.

Organic fertilizers such as rock phosphate and green sand can be mixed into backfill mix before planting. They however cannot be used as top dressings. A complete low nitrogen fertilizer such as 5-10-5 or 5-10-10 can be used after planting to encourage new roots. Peonies can be fed every few years after spring bloom. Spent blooms should be deadheaded before making any application. New roots are forming at this time. **DO NOT OVER FERTILIZE.** Nutrition is not a big issue for peonies. Occasional feeding is fine.



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