

Growing Peonies



These traditional perennials will bring colour and texture to the garden for decades. Reliably hardy and easy to grow, Peonies will grow in any well drained soil, but do require full sunlight in order to bloom.

Planting

Dig a planting hole of 8 to 10 inches deep, three feet away from other plants, placing the eyes (buds) no more than two inches below the surface. Peonies set deeper than this may produce lush foliage but fail to bloom.

Fertilizing

Peonies are heavy feeders and prefer a slow release fertilizer such as bone meal or kelp meal worked into the soil around each plant. Alternatively, amend the soil by applying one to two inches of compost around the plant, working it well into the soil.

Staking

Taller peony varieties and those with double flowers usually need staking. Peony cages should be set out in early spring, to circle and support the plant as it grows large.

Dividing

When old, established peony clumps become too crowded, flowering may be reduced and the roots should be divided. In September, cut the stems near ground level and dig the roots carefully with a spading fork. Shake the roots to remove loose soil and then wash off most of the soil.

Washing the soil away helps you to locate natural crown cleavage areas so that less of the fleshy roots are lost while dividing the clumps. Each division should have three to five healthy eyes (buds) attached to three or four thick roots. Note that most peonies will not require division for several years.

Not blooming well?

If your plants are crowded or shaded by surrounding trees and shrubs, think about dividing or moving them. The best time to do this is early fall.

Peonies will also not bloom well if planted too deep. If recently transplanted, dig up plants and check the planting depth.



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Peony Diseases

Botrytis

This fungus attacks newer growth and will eventually cover them with a dense velvety gray mold. Very young shoots may be blighted early on and turn black.

Botrytis may also attack developing flower parts, causing bud to blacken and remain unopened. Remove any wilted stems, cutting below the affected area. **Discard in the garbage (not the compost) and disinfect your pruners.**

Types of Peonies



Herbaceous

The most common of the peonies, these peonies die to the ground every winter, and grow back from the crown each spring. Very hardy, many varieties to choose from.

Itoh

A cross between the Herbaceous and Tree Peony. Has the blooms of Tree peony but hardiness of the Herbaceous. Available in exciting colours such as yellow and magenta, so usually demand a higher price. Stronger stems mean staking may not be required.



Fernleaf

Unusually ferny foliage forms a tight ball. Red single or double blossoms in early summer are slightly smaller than herbaceous blooms. Does not prefer a hot, dry site. Note: may go dormant after blooming; mark the planting spot so as to not mistakenly disturb soil area while plant is dormant.



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Peony Blooms



Single

Composed of a few broad petals in a single row, surrounding a mass of stamens.

Japanese

Still a single row of petals, however stamens are very thick and create a large pom pom in the center of the bloom.



Semi Double

A couple of layers of petals with a small amount of stamens in the middle.

Double

Several rows of petals make up a fully double bloom that hide the stamens.



Bomb

Globe shaped blooms sit above a single row of flattened petals.



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