

Peonies celebrates the delicate palette, sumptuous beauty and sweet perfume of one of the world's favourite flowers.

Lavishly illustrated with specially commissioned photography, this beautiful companion shows you how easy it is to grow these bountiful blooms and fill your home with spectacular cut flowers. From the strikingly simple Claire de Lune to the frilly petticoat-like Bowl of Cream, you'll discover a splendid collection of classics, as well as the best modern varieties.

Over 50 types of peony have been captured by leading floral photographer Georgianna Lane, and are brought to life with fresh commentary and no-fuss growing advice from award-winning author Jane Eastoe. Whether you have a lavish garden or a simple container, lose yourself in the enduring charm and classic beauty of peonies.

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PEONIES

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GIBBS
SMITH

JANE EASTOE
photography by
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PEONIES

beautiful varieties for home and garden



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Gay Paree

A circle of eye-catching, deep mauve-pink guard petals encloses a great tufted mound of pale pink notched petaloids, all tipped with white and infused with buttery yellow tones at the base. As the lightly perfumed flower ages, the guard petals fade and the petaloids grow so the flower increases in volume, reaching a diameter of 10cm (4in).

Introduced by the amateur grower Edward Auten in 1933, it received an Award of Landscape Merit from the American Peony Society in 2014.

-
- Type** Anemone
 - Flowering** Early summer
 - Aspect** Full sun or partial shade
 - Soil** Fertile and humus-rich
 - Average height** 75cm (2ft 6in)
 - Average spread** 90cm (3ft)
 - Foliage** Mid-green
 - Support** The flower stems benefit from staking
 - As a cut flower** A good, long-lasting cutting variety
 - Similar varieties** Magic Orb





Coral Charm

There are some flowers whose gaudy palettes become a joyous celebration of bold colour combinations, and Coral Charm is one such bloom. It is no pastel mother-of-the-bride flower – the glossy outer petals of this lotus-like bloom are a strident orangey pink, with graduated hues to the central thatch of orange-yellow stamens. The carpels are green and tipped with raspberry-pink stigmas. As a style magazine might say – it shouldn't work, but it does! The flowers, which reach 12cm (4¾in) in diameter, fade with maturity to a creamy pink (see pages 82–83).

Introduced by Samuel Wissing from Lombard, Illinois, in 1964, Coral Charm took a Royal Horticultural Society Award of Garden Merit in 2012 and was awarded a Gold Medal by the American Peony Society in 1986.

Type Semi-double

Flowering Early to midsummer

Aspect Full sun or partial shade

Soil Fertile and humus-rich

Average height 95cm (3ft 2in)

Average spread 60cm (2ft)

Foliage Dark green

Support Sturdy stems, so it shouldn't require staking

As a cut flower Superb cut blooms that look striking combined with pale green foliage or flowers

Similar varieties Coral Sunset



High Noon

Budding lemon yellow, the incurving blooms of this hybrid tree peony open a warm, buttery yellow and the petals have a dark red flare at the base. This provides the perfect backdrop for the thick thatch of stamens, with old-gold anthers borne on red filaments. The green carpels are encased in a cream sheath and bear cream stigmas. With maturity, the 20cm (8in) flower fades through tones of primrose and cream.

Drooping their heads modestly, the blooms sit above a pretty mound of foliage and have a light but sweet lemon fragrance. High Noon has the unusual distinction of not only blooming in late spring but carrying a second flush in late summer or early autumn, though the show will be small second time around. It also has the advantage of being one of the easiest tree peonies to grow.

Another superb peony from the great Professor Arthur Saunders, High Noon was introduced in 1952, a year before his death, and took the American Peony Society's Gold Medal in 1989.

Type Semi-double

Flowering Late spring and late summer or early autumn

Aspect Full sun or partial shade

Soil Fertile and humus-rich

Average height 1.5–1.8m (5–6ft)

Average spread 1.5m (5ft)

Foliage Dark green

Support Strong stems

As a cut flower Imposing

Similar varieties Oukan



Miss America

No newcomer, Miss America has maintained her status as one of the most prized peonies and continues to win accolades. Budding blush pink, this peony quickly transforms on opening into a pure white, cupped bloom, with toothed petals lightly pleated like a Fortuny dress (see pages 204–205). At the centre of the flower is a thick fringe of sulphur-yellow stamens, encircling green carpels. Reaching 14cm (5½in) in diameter, the bloom emits a delicious citrus fragrance. Once established, Miss America puts on quite a show; it can produce around 50 blooms per season. It is also said to be one of the easiest varieties to propagate by seed.

Superb in the border and as a cut flower, this much admired peony was cultivated by Chicago-based James R. Mann and introduced in 1936 by Mann and J. van Steen. Impressively, it has twice been given the American Peony Society Gold Medal, in 1956 and 1971, and received the Royal Horticultural Society’s Gold Medal in 2012.

-
- Type** Semi-double
 - Flowering** Late spring to early summer
 - Aspect** Full sun or partial shade
 - Soil** Fertile and humus-rich
 - Average height** 90cm (3ft)
 - Average spread** 90cm (3ft)
 - Foliage** Glossy mid-green
 - Support** Strong but long stems – staking may be required
 - As a cut flower** Long-lasting cut flowers borne on slender stems
 - Similar varieties** Zuzu







Singing in the Rain

This soft and pretty intersectional hybrid is like an ever-changing watercolour, budding pink and opening to reveal yellow petals infused and streaked with pink. With maturity the pink fades and the petals become entirely yellow. The carpels are green, topped with yellow stigmas, and are encircled by sulphur-yellow anthers carried on pink filaments. The lightly perfumed blooms reach a diameter of 15cm (6in) and are carried on strong herbaceous stems, each bearing a number of flowers. As the name hints, it is barely affected by even heavy rain.

Donald Smith of West Newton, Massachusetts, introduced Singing in the Rain in 2002. Since retiring from his work as a research physicist in 2003, Smith has devoted himself to hybridizing intersectional peonies and has introduced more than 40 varieties.

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- Type** Semi-double
 - Flowering** Early summer
 - Aspect** Full sun or partial shade
 - Soil** Fertile and humus-rich
 - Average height** 90cm (3ft)
 - Average spread** 1.2m (4ft)
 - Foliage** Mid-green
 - Support** No staking required
 - As a cut flower** Exquisite blooms borne on long stems
 - Similar varieties** Pastel Splendor



Chocolate Soldier

This small peony produces sculptural, glossy, dark brown-red petals. The flower form is Japanese, but the same plant can also produce fully double blooms. The carpels are cream tipped with sugar pink, and these are ringed by long sulphur-yellow anthers borne on bright red filaments.

Chocolate Soldier was introduced in 1939 by Edward Auten of Princeville, Illinois. A banker by profession, Auten started a peony nursery in his youth and over a 40-year period he introduced some 300 varieties.

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- Type** Japanese to double
 - Flowering** Mid-spring
 - Aspect** Full sun or partial shade
 - Soil** Fertile and humus-rich
 - Average height** 70cm (2ft 4in)
 - Average spread** 60cm (2ft)
 - Foliage** Dark green
 - Support** Strong stems, does not require staking
 - As a cut flower** Superb, long-lasting flowers when cut
 - Similar varieties** William F. Turner

