Peony Research

Dr. Patricia Holloway
University of Alaska Fairbanks
Georgeson Botanical Garden
Basis for Research:

Alaska peonies unique in world markets
– Bloom times late June through August
Two areas of interest

- Field cultivation techniques
- Market research- does anybody out there want Alaska peonies?
Peony Cultivation Research

- Cultivar evaluations
- Soil amendments
- Spacing
- Shading to delay snowmelt and flowering
- Winter mulching/snowmaking
- Disease/insect pest monitoring
Cultivar (cultivated varieties) evaluations

• Begun in 2001

• 30 cultivars
  – Late season
  – Stem length > 24 inches
  – Recommended as cut flowers
Planting

- South slope
- Fairbanks silt loam soils
- Overhead irrigation yr 1, 2 then trickle
- pH 6.4
- Landscape fabric
- Fertilizer 10-20-20s lb/100 sq ft
Rejocts

• Died
  – ‘Nancy Nichols’
  – ‘Vivid Rose’

• Poor performers
  (< 3 flowers per plant)
  – ‘Gardenia’
  – ‘Better Times’
  – ‘Mons. Jules Elie’
  – ‘Raspberry Sundae’
Top 5 performers

‘Dr. Alexander Fleming’

‘Felix Crouse’

‘David Harum’

‘Duchess de Nemours’

‘Sarah Bernhardt’
Top 5 cultivars

- Tallest, strongest stems
- 7-9 blooms per plant
- Double or semi double
- Flower quality

Yield of usable cut stems in Duchess de Nemours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (planted in 2001)</th>
<th>Number of flowering stems</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>10.0</td>
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Spacing & soil amendments

- begun in 2002

- 12, 17, 24 inches between plants in rows

- Silt loam
- Lemeta peat
- Garden compost
Making snow for winter protection

- Lots of water
- Temps below 25°F
- Shut off = freeze up
- Time consuming
- Compressor + Power washer + wand
- Mid winter thaw = disaster
Botrytis blight
Aphids

Lygus (stink) bug

Thrips

Peony budblast

U.S.D.A. Agricultural Research Service
Peony Growers

• How does the rest of the world grow peonies?

Oregon Roses, Inc. Forest Grove, OR

Jense Farm, British Columbia

Adelman Peonies, Salem, OR.
Peony growing

- Few constants
  - Sarah, Duchess, Red Charm
- Plant spacing
- Hilling
- Trellising
- Time of harvest
- Irrigation
- Fertilizers

To trellis or not?
On-farm sorting shed & cooler
Peony Markets

Is there a market for Alaska peonies?

How do we process them for market?

Where do we sell them?

Can we make a million bucks?
Wholesale flower distributors

Los Angeles
San Francisco
Portland

Omeo Peonies, New Zealand

Flamingo Holdings, Ltd. UK

Mayesh Wholesale Flowers, L.A.

Oregon
Farmer’s markets
CSA
Ebay

Contracts
(ad agencies, hotels, florists)

Grower

Possibly through Broker, Co-op

Direct to Consumer

Wholesale Flower Markets
Trial run with Mayesh Wholesale Flowers, L.A.

Recycled rose boxes
Gold Streak (33 lb)
240 stems
Mayesh said yes,
…and they pay shipping!

$1.00 - $1.50 per stem = 2-3 x going rate
Alaska Peony Growers?

- 35 interested individuals and businesses
  - Fairbanks, Eielson, Delta, Mat Valley, Kenai, Homer, Nenana, North Pole

- 12 already have peonies planted
  - 25 - 3000 plants
Main issues

• Getting flowers to markets
  – How to sell, where to sell
  – How much will the market pay?
  – On-farm coolers
  – Methods of packing, storing
  – Possible marketing co-op
Can we grow marketable peonies as cut flowers?  
Yes!

Is there a market for Alaska-grown peonies?  
Yes!

Can a grower make a million bucks?  
Yes!

Alaska Peony Growers Blog  
akpeonygrowers.blogspot.com  
fnjth1@uaf.edu