



GEORGESON
BOTANICAL GARDEN



University of Alaska Fairbanks
School of Natural Resources and Extension



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Peony Growers Meet in Fairbanks

by
Pat Holloway

On December 2, the GBG hosted the first meeting of Alaskans interested in growing peonies as cut flowers for export to floral markets around the world. More than 20 people participated in this first discussion of peony cultivation and marketing. It drew growers from Homer, Kenai, Palmer/Wasilla, Delta Junction, Nenana, Fairbanks and North Pole as well as representatives from the State Division of Agriculture and UAF Cooperative Extension Service. Pat Holloway and Jan Hanscom summarized five years of research with peony cultivation at the Fairbanks Experiment Farm and presented the results of visits to peony markets and growers on the West Coast.

The peony program at the botanical garden revealed great potential in developing an export market for cut flowers since Alaska is the only place in the world with peonies blooming in July and August. Other plants that have shown this unique flowering are lilacs and lily-of-the-valley, but there probably are more. Growers have already planted as many as 3000 peony plants and are beginning discussions on forming a marketing cooperative to sell cut flowers. This statewide effort will require a centralized grading and packing facility, perhaps in Anchorage that would allow growers from around the state to sell peonies.

The national and international markets for cut flowers are huge, and Alaska can take advantage of the air traffic in both Fairbanks and Anchorage to ship fresh flowers worldwide. Inquiries have already come in from wholesale houses in England and the West Coast as well as advertising agencies and Hollywood film sets for Alaska peonies. Future projects will explore different markets for Alaska-grown cut flowers - everything from retail florist shops to Ebay®!

Peonies from the Georgeson Botanical Garden made it onto the "What do You Know" show with Michael Feldman that was broadcast from Fairbanks this past summer as well as being used in arrangements by the Extreme Home Makeover show during the unveiling of the home they built in North Pole.

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