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Contributed by Kim Eckert

## An Amazing Time For Peonies

Every year, I look forward to the month (usually May) when peonies are in full bloom. They are intricately beautiful, often accompanied by a dreamy scent and well, give us a glimpse of botanical perfection. As most peonies in our area are just budding, I thought it may be the time to delve into a little of the history and meaning surrounding them.

Peonies date back to 1000 BC in China (Bloom and Wild). They finally made their way to Europe in the 1800's and eventually to North America. Peonies grow best in cooler climates, zones 3 to 8, which makes our area perfect. They need 5-6 hours of sun, moist and rich soil, good drainage, and shelter from strong winds. Beyond their cultural requirements, they may need to be staked when flowering, but are generally fairly low maintenance.

Over the centuries, peonies have been symbolic of many things. In China and Japan, peonies meant "king of flowers" and were originally used by royalty to celebrate important events. They symbolized wealth, bravery, and good fortune. As peonies were introduced in Europe and North America, their symbolism changed. They were thought to symbolize prosperity, good luck and love and those are still the virtues we think of today when planting or purchasing peonies.

Although fall is the best time to transplant peonies, it can be done now, in the spring. If you are inspired to bring a new peony into your landscape, these are some of the best:



*'Miss America'*

**'Coral Charm'** has gorgeous coral blooms against deep green foliage. Winner of the American Peony Society's Gold Medal in 1986. Fragrant, easy to grow and resistant to deer, this is a wonderful choice for any garden.

**'Miss America'** is an abundant-flowering white semi-double with strong 3-foot-tall stems. Also an award winner.

**'Old Faithful'**, yet another gold-medal winner, is considered one of the best doubles. It is 36-inches-tall and has deep red blooms. They keep their upright form even in wind and rain.



*'Coral Charm'*



*'Old Faithful'*

Photo/Illustration:  
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