



Uncanoonuc Mt. Perennials

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Peonies

Select a site in full sun or very light shade with good soil drainage--not a boggy spot.

Dig the planting hole at least 12-18" deep and 2' wide. Enrich the soil with lots of organic matter (peat moss, rotted manure or compost).

Peonies prefer soil that is slightly acidic. If your soil is very acidic, lime the plants about every three years. Wood ashes work. Do not lime every year.

Fertilize each April with 5-10-5 or 10-10-10.

Full-grown plants are about 3' high and 3' wide. Give them room to grow in. (Fernleaf, Kemp and Pink Memorial Day peonies are smaller, getting about 2' high and 2' wide.)

For plants dug from the garden in the fall, set the buds on the crown 1-1½" below the soil surface. Setting the plants too deeply prevents flowering. For spring or summer planting, set at the same depth they were grown in the pot.

Every fall after a hard frost, clip all peony foliage and stems to the ground and dispose of in the trash, not the compost. Sanitation helps control the Botrytis fungus--the most common problem peonies have.

Keep your new transplants well watered for several weeks. Water deeply and less often rather than shallowly every day.

A mulch around the plants helps keep the moisture in and weeds down. A winter mulch (applied over the plants after the ground has frozen) is not necessary.

Peonies may be divided to propagate them, but it is not necessary. If you do decide to divide your peonies, September is a good month to do it in.

Staking peonies early in the season will prevent the large flowers from flopping after a heavy rain. Special peony supports or "rings" are available.

Ants! Don't panic. Ants visit peony buds and flowers to feed on their nectar. They do not harm the flowers. Their presence serves to protect the peonies by keeping other insects away. If you want to pick the flowers for indoor enjoyment, simply swish them through a container of water a few times and then gently shake.

