

# PEONY CARE

No other flower can compare to the beauty of a Peony. As beautiful as they are, they are one of the most unfussy of all plants. Once established, Peonies can live for 50 years or more without care. They are most commonly sold as plants in the spring, but are sometimes available in the fall as bare root. At Family Tree we carry the largest selection of varieties in spring. Plant the Peonies in an area with at least 6 hours of direct sun and plenty of room to grow. Amend the planting hole with compost and fertilize spring and fall with an organic, slow release low Nitrogen fertilizer, like Tomato-tone. Blooms can be cut off once they fade, however do not cut back foliage until it begins to die back naturally.

## Peonies still not blooming?

A checklist for potential reasons why a peony is budding and not opening or not budding at all:

**Sun:** Make sure they are getting at least 6 hours of direct sunlight.

**Fix:** Relocate in autumn to sunnier spot.

**Depth:** Peony roots do not want to be deeper than 2 inches under the soil. This is not just an issue for newly planted peonies, older plants can have this problem with years of re-piling compost and mulch atop crowns.

**Fix:** In autumn, dig up clumps and raise it closer to surface.

**Weather:** All peonies bloom early – some varieties earlier than others. Couple with our typical late frosts and this season's buds can be frozen.

**Fix:** Try again next year; plant a later blooming variety, cover with frost blanket.

**Needs Dividing:** Older plants can stop blooming after years of becoming too compacted.

**Fix:** In autumn, divide peony and replant.

**New Planting:** It can take up to three years for new peonies to bloom well, so patience is the key.

**Fix:** Patience; make sure they are not planted too deep.

**Over Fertilizing:** All plants like to be fed, however for the best blooming, feed Peonies sparingly with a low Nitrogen fertilizer. High Nitrogen feedings can encourage too much foliage without the sought after blooms.

**Fix:** Use low Nitrogen fertilizer only once or twice a year; make sure they are not getting hit by lawn food during feedings.

**Insects:** If buds are partially opening and then falling off, Thrips could be culprit.

**Fix:** Spray plants with Acephate Systemic Insecticide.

**Fungus:** Peonies can get fungus which doesn't stop them from blooming but makes them and the foliage ugly with black spotting.

**Fix:** Cut off infected areas and dispose and apply a fungicide the following spring and prevent a recurring problem.



**And what about the ants?**

There are a lot of misconceptions about peonies and ants...Planting peonies will not cause an ant infestation! There is some research that certain varieties may attract ants, however, once the bloom is open the ants will disappear. Peonies do not need ants to open! The blooms will open regardless of ants. Plants can be sprayed with an insecticide, however, since the ants are harmless and will disappear in a matter of days we recommend not using potentially harmful chemicals. Just remember this has been going on long before we were on this planet – and before there were household insecticides!



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