



Friends of the Central Experimental Farm

Spring 2019 Newsletter

Volume 31 No. 2



Lindsay D'Aoust

'George Vorauer', one of the peonies of Maurice Ménard (see page 12).

Tending the Peonies

By Bill Wegman

In and around the Farm's Ornamental Gardens there is a grand total of 575 peonies, ranging in age from one to 16 years.

The plants cover a broad spectrum of herbaceous peonies including species, lactiflora (the traditional double-flower scented "Grandma's peony") and hybrids. The hybrids, which are crosses between two or more different species, provide earlier blooming and a greater range of colours. The Saunders plants are hybrids. These were bred by Percy Saunders, one of the sons of

William Saunders, first director of the Central Experimental Farm, and the Farm has the largest collection of them in North America.

Layout of the peony beds

The present beds were laid out in 2001 with eight circular and three rectangular beds. The latter were placed near Prince of Wales Drive. A few years later the main, rectangular Saunders bed was added, also near Prince of Wales Drive. Later, two beds were built next to the Macoun Garden, one

to house a collection of Itoh peonies that had been donated and the other to house new divisions of some old-stock peonies which were in serious decline.

The Itoh or intersectional peonies are a cross between the lactiflora (herbaceous) and the shrub or tree peony, and provide the benefits of both. The tree peony genes provide larger blooms and brighter colours; the herbaceous genes provide below-ground buds, giving the plant better winter hardiness.

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The Community

National Volunteer Week this year is April 7-13, a time to celebrate and thank Canada's volunteers, who according to the Conference Board of Canada, donated over two billion hours in 2017. In dollars this was valued at 55.9 billion, equivalent to 2.6 percent of the GDP. Some gift!

We are very proud and grateful that the Friends of the Central Experimental Farm volunteers make an impressive contribution to this labour. In 2018, their gift represented over 10,000 hours, or an estimated quarter of a million dollars. Some volunteers! The Friends have maintained this level of effort for many consecutive years, demonstrating a resolve and spirit that has been in evidence since the formation of the group in 1988.

Most Canadians volunteer because they want to make a positive contribution to the community. The Friends are no exception, working to make everyone's visit to the Farm as enjoyable as possible. This includes caring for and improving the garden beds and shrubs under the direction of Agriculture and Agri-Food staff, as well as hosting special events. The Farm is a

haven of beauty, rest, and enjoyment, and a source of information and education because of dedicated volunteers.

They are champions of the Farm in word and action. Their presence on the Farm signals a connection between the public and the scientific institution—a connection that was part of the Central Experimental Farm's original vision. The Farm fosters many different kinds of public contact, from the Canada Agriculture and Food Museum and the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, to plant sales and tree tours. These activities represent true public outreach, engaging people in the results of plant research through many different channels. In the end, the public becomes more aware of their connections to agriculture and the environment, and the benefits of this connectedness flow both ways.

Volunteers report that they receive many rewards for their labours. Working in a beautiful landscape, being outdoors in a healthy environment, getting exercise, and enjoying companionship all contribute to an increase in feelings of self-worth and general well-being. What's not to like?

The Friends also participate in the Central Experimental Farm Advisory Council, which was set up to obtain public input into the Farm's management. Currently, the Advisory Council is creating tools to measure how the public uses the Farm. We want to know what activities are most popular with people when they are enjoying their favourite parts of the Farm. You will get a chance to help us by filling in a survey that will be launched in the near future.

You can also assist us in enabling the Friends to get better at how they run things. Volunteers with technology skills are particularly welcome, to address social media and other needs. We've taken steps to improve our efficiency and are undergoing an extensive financial audit in keeping with new federal requirements. But there's always room for improvement, so please let us know if you'd like to help—contact volunteer@friendsofthefarm.ca

Meanwhile, a BIG thanks to all you volunteers!

Eric Jones
Acting President



La collectivité

Cette année, la Semaine de l'action bénévole 2019 aura lieu du 7 au 13 avril prochain. Voici l'occasion de célébrer et de remercier les bénévoles au pays qui, selon le Conference Board du Canada, auront donné deux milliards d'heures de leur temps en 2017. Selon l'évaluation qui en a été faite, ces heures comptent pour 55,9 milliards de dollars, soit l'équivalent de 2,6 pour cent du PIB. Pour un don, c'en est tout un!

Nous éprouvons une très grande fierté et reconnaissance envers les Amis de la Ferme expérimentale centrale qui apportent une contribution remarquable envers cette réalisation. En 2018, leur don a représenté plus de 10 000 heures ou un montant évalué à un quart de millions de dollars. Ce sont de formidables bénévoles! Les Amis ont maintenu ce niveau d'efforts sur une période de plusieurs années consécutives, faisant preuve d'une détermination et d'un état d'esprit bien évidents depuis la formation du groupe en 1988.

La plupart des Canadiens font du bénévolat, car ils désirent contribuer de façon positive à leur collectivité. Les Amis n'y font pas exception, et ils veillent à ce que la visite de toute personne à la Ferme soit des plus agréables. C'est manifeste dans les soins et l'embellissement qu'ils apportent aux plates-bandes et aux arbustes dans les jardins, sous la direction du personnel d'Agriculture et Agroalimentaire Canada, ainsi que dans la tenue d'événements

spéciaux. Grâce au dévouement de ses bénévoles, la Ferme est un havre de beauté, de repos, de joie, et en plus, une source d'information et d'éducation.

Que ce soit par leurs paroles ou leurs actes, ils sont les champions de la Ferme. Leur présence sur les lieux démontre l'existence d'une relation ou d'un lien entre le public et l'institution à vocation scientifique – une relation inscrite dans la vision originale de la Ferme expérimentale centrale. La Ferme incite, par de multiples moyens, des contacts avec le public, qu'il s'agisse d'une visite au musée de l'agriculture et de l'alimentation du Canada et au Jardin écologique Fletcher ou à l'occasion de ventes de plantes et de visites guidées pour découvrir la majestueuse beauté des arbres. Ces activités démontrent un désir réel d'informer et de mobiliser le public, par de multiples moyens, en ce qui a trait aux résultats de la recherche sur les végétaux. En fin de compte, les membres du public deviennent plus conscients de leur relation avec l'agriculture et l'environnement, et les avantages de cette relation vont dans les deux sens.

Des bénévoles indiquent qu'ils jouissent d'une grande variété de récompenses grâce à leur travail. Le fait d'œuvrer en pleine nature, en agréable compagnie, dans un environnement paysager sain et d'une rare beauté, en faisant de l'exercice de surcroît mène à une conscientisation accentuée de sa propre valeur et de son

bien-être général. Que désirez de plus?

De plus, les Amis siègent au comité consultatif de la Ferme expérimentale centrale, lequel a été créé pour obtenir l'apport du public en matière de gestion de la Ferme. Actuellement, le comité consultatif désire connaître les activités qui sont les plus populaires chez les personnes qui visitent leurs coins favoris de la Ferme. Vous aurez l'occasion d'indiquer vos commentaires dans un sondage qui sera publié dans un avenir rapproché.

Vous pouvez aussi nous offrir votre appui pour aider les Amis à devenir meilleurs dans l'exécution de leurs tâches. Des bénévoles possédant des compétences en technologie sont particulièrement recherchés afin de composer avec les demandes liées aux médias sociaux et à d'autres besoins. Nous avons pris des mesures afin d'accroître notre efficacité et nous procédons actuellement à un audit des états financiers compréhensif afin de satisfaire aux nouvelles exigences fédérales. Bien entendu, il y a du potentiel pour rehausser l'état des choses, et nous vous invitons à communiquer avec nous si vous désirez offrir votre aide à l'adresse que voici : volunteer@friendsofthefarm.ca.

Entre-temps, un SINCÈRE merci à tous les bénévoles!

Eric Jones
Président par intérim

Tending the Peonies ... *(continued from Page 1)*

In conjunction with the traffic circle renewal and beautification project a few years ago, two beds were placed northwest of the circle, and are now known as the Campus beds. Last year, two new Arboretum beds were built northeast of the traffic circle and contain plants from the previous Arboretum bed near the old magnolia collection.

Growing peonies

Peony plants are established by roots being divided and then planted in the fall. A standard root division contains three to five eyes. Thus, the following spring three to five stems should emerge; however, some buds may be held back in reserve and a bloom or two will likely result. Sometimes it takes a second year for the plant to build sufficient strength to bloom. At six years, the plant is considered mature and at or near its peak. With age, bloom size decreases since the stems become crowded and the roots are unable to maintain plant vitality. Commercial practice is to divide after 10 years.

Peonies grow well in temperate climates in well-drained soil and with winters cold enough to satisfy dormancy requirements. They are, however, subject to various fungal diseases and nematodes.

Diseases and nematodes

The most serious fungal diseases the Farm's peonies are subject to are Botrytis and Crown Rot. Botrytis affects the bud, leaf, or stem. The affected area wilts, turns brown, and dries up. To control this disease, the affected part is simply removed. Botrytis is much more prevalent when the weather is cool and wet. This is an on-going problem, but is well managed by continued attention and good garden practices.

A more serious issue is Crown Rot, which affects the root crown. It can result in

complete rotting of the root crown and destruction of the plant.

Because the rot occurs below ground, it is difficult to detect. Some plant varieties are more susceptible than others. Some of the Farm's prized Saunders peonies have been lost to Crown Rot. The disease is controlled by ensuring good soil drainage, but again weather is a determining factor, and that is out of our control. Climate change, which can bring more variable weather, such as a cool wet fall and/or a cool wet spring, is a challenge to maintaining peony health.

The Root-knot Nematode (*Meloidogyne hapla*) is a microscopic soil-dwelling parasite that feeds off the new root tips of a plant, effectively sapping its strength. Affected plants become sickly, develop short spindly stems, and fail to flower. Examination of the root shows branched feeder roots bearing small galls.

Control is achieved by removing the affected plant and all the soil around it, and using clean soil in which to plant a nematode-free plant. The plant itself may be saved, if the infestation is caught early on, by removing all galls and affected roots and placing it in a nursery bed for a few years to recover.



Jocelyne Charron

Jean-Charles Charron and Bill Wegman, June 2018.

Tree peonies

As previously mentioned, the Itoh peonies, which are a cross between the herbaceous and tree peonies, have the beautiful, large blooms of the tree peony parent. Tree peonies were tested in the Arboretum in 1894 and found to be too tender. They would have needed winter protection in those early years of the Farm. Today, however, they are common in Ottawa gardens—one advantage of climate warming. They do not need a bed of their own and they do well in open and semi-shade, with only some morning or evening sun. Tree peonies could make a splendid addition to the Farm's peony collection!

Bill Wegman, a retired communications engineer, tends his own peonies and those in the Ornamental Gardens, where he leads the volunteer peony team.

This Year's First Two Tree Tours

Don't miss the first two guided tree tours in the Arboretum this year. See <https://friendsofthefarm.ca/arboretum-tree-tours/> for more information on these and other tours. Although the tours are free and open to the public, please register in advance at info@friendsofthefarm.ca or call 613-230-3276. Donations to the Friends of the Farm will be kindly accepted during the tour.

Sunday, May 5, 10 am—**Tree Identification 101, by Ken Farr and Zoe Panchen**

Would you like to know a little more about the trees as you walk among them in the beautiful Arboretum? Our guides will help you to be able to identify trees and find out more about them. The emerging flowers and leaves of spring are an added bonus for this tour.

Sunday, June 2, 10 am—**Trees of the Southeastern United States at the Arboretum, by Owen Clarkin and Eric Jones**

This tour will feature trees and shrubs native to the southern part of the eastern forest of North America. Some of these trees may be suitable for planting in our region today, even more so in the future if we get more summer droughts and heatwaves. We'll look at southern trees such as Magnolias, Sweetgum, Persimmon, Sweetshrub, in addition to "Carolinian" trees native to southwestern Ontario.

Upcoming Events, 2019

For more information, visit www.friendsofthefarm.ca, email us at info@friendsofthefarm.ca, or call 613-230-3276.

Volunteer Orientation

- Saturday, April 6, at 9:30 am.
- Free admission.
- Location: Building 72, Arboretum.

Annual General Meeting

- Wednesday, April 17, 7 pm - 9 pm.
- Guest speaker will be Michael Runtz (*see below*). His topic is "The Flora and Fauna of Algonquin Park."
- Free admission, membership not required.
- Location: K. W. Neatby Building, Salons A & B, Carling & Maple Drive.

Friends' Plant Sale

- Sunday, May 12, 9 am to 1 pm. (*Rain or shine*).
- Location: Parking lot beside K. W. Neatby Bldg. at Carling and Maple Drive.
- Free parking on Maple Drive and in the Observatory parking lot.
- Free admission. Donations to the Friends of the Farm gratefully accepted.

Lilac Walk

- Sunday, May 19, 1 pm.
- Enjoy a guided tour of the lilacs with the Friends of the Farm lilac team. Discover the many lilac varieties on display.
- Park at the Agriculture Museum lot (Pay and Display) and follow the signs.
- Free admission; donations gratefully accepted.

Fletcher Wildlife Garden – Native Plant Sale

- Saturday, June 1, 9:30 am to 12:30 pm.
- Fletcher Wildlife Garden, Prince of Wales Drive south of the Arboretum.
- Free admission. For information call (613) 730-0714 or e-mail fletcher@ofnc.ca.

Peony Lecture

- Tuesday, June 4, 7 to 9 p m.
- Building 72 in the Arboretum at the Central Experimental Farm.
- Blaine Marchand will talk about the marvelous peonies of A.P. (Percy) Saunders.
- Free admission. A donation of \$10 to the Friends would be appreciated.

Used Book Sale

- Saturday, June 15 and Sunday, June 16, from 10 am to 4 pm.
- Location: Building 72, Arboretum, CEF. Take the east exit off the Prince of Wales roundabout.
- Admission and parking are free at Building 72.

June Blooms Garden Tours

- Sunday, June 16, from 10 am to 2 pm. (*Will be cancelled in case of rain.*)
- Friends volunteers will offer guided tours of the historic peony, rose and other collections at the Ornamental Gardens.
- Free admission. No registration required.
- Location: Ornamental Gardens, southwest of Prince of Wales roundabout.

Victorian Tea

- Saturday, July 20, from 2 to 4 pm. (*Rain date is Sunday, July 21.*)
- Classic tea served under the trees at the Arboretum.
- High tea is \$15, reservations not required.
- More information at friendsofthefarm.ca.

Nature's Ambassador

All are welcome to the Farm on April 17 to hear Michael Runtz talk about "The Flora and Fauna of Algonquin Park."

Michael has worked as a naturalist in provincial and national parks. He is a photographer, wilderness guide, biologist, teacher, consultant, with a dozen best-selling books, several of which are about Algonquin Park. He teaches natural history and ornithology at Carleton University, where his infectious and enthusiastic teaching style has made his courses immensely popular with thousands of students.



Ideas and Tips from Master Gardeners

Here are the 2019 talks by Master Gardeners, to be held Tuesdays from 7 to 9 pm in Building 72, Arboretum, Central Experimental Farm. See www.friendsofthefarm.ca/master-gardener-lectures for more information.

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| April 2 | - Savvy Choices for Spring with Mary Shearman Reid and Stephanie Sleeth. |
| April 16 | - The Art of Rock Gardening with Josie Pazdzior and Rob Stuart. |
| April 30 | - Trees and Shrubs: the Backbones of Your Garden with Diane McClymont Peace. |
| May 14 | - Kitchen Gardens with Judith Cox. |
| September 10 | - Cooking with Edible Flowers and Herbs with Nancy McDonald. |

Dear Members

Please note that only paid-up members are eligible to vote at the AGM on April 17 on matters concerning the Friends of the Farm. If you are not sure whether your membership is still valid, you may contact membership@friendsofthefarm.ca or call the office at 613-230-3276.

If you received this newsletter via post, your date of renewal is printed on the address label. Memberships can be renewed at the AGM, please arrive 15 minutes ahead of time to fill in the appropriate forms.

Jeremy DiZazzo, Lead Hand

By Joan Butcher

Jeremy DiZazzo, the man who directs the work of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's gardens team, is the proud possessor of the delightful and all-encompassing official title, "Lead Hand, Woody Plants and Ornamental Gardens/Horticulturist." His office space is one of the more extensive and surely the most beautiful that the Government of Canada has to offer: the over-1000 acres of fields, trees and gardens that constitute the Central Experimental Farm (CEF).

Connection to the Farm

His connection to the Farm stretches back to his youth, when he played at the Farm in winter and accompanied his grandmother to the Ornamental Gardens in summer. He remembers her stories of the wonderful chrysanthemum shows that were a famous event on the Farm from 1914 to 1992. The Tropical Greenhouse holds a special place in his history, too, because it was there that he proposed to his wife.

During high school, Jeremy started to work on the Farm as a summer employee through a federal work experience program. And you could say he never really left. Although he considered a career in police work, and took courses in that field, the satisfactions of his continuing summer work in the Ornamental Gardens and hopes for a full-time position there led him to Algonquin College's Horticultural Technician Program. Mentored by Sharon Saunders, his boss and former Lead Hand and Horticulturist of the Ornamental Gardens, after graduation Jeremy persevered through contract work and eventually won a job competition. He became a permanent employee in 2007.

A complicated workplace

Jeremy's workplace is not only geographically huge, it's very

complicated. He operates in an environment that is made up of many unique, historical areas and structures such as the Arboretum, the Tropical House, the Agriculture and Food Museum, the Merivale Shelterbelt, and of course the Gardens - Hosta, Peony, Rock, Macoun, Lilac, Iris/Daylily, Perennial, Annual, Heritage Rose and Explorer Rose. There's also a formidable array of partners who have roles to play in the Farm. These include the National Capital Commission, Heritage Canada, Parks Canada, Ingenium, the City of Ottawa, the Ottawa Field Naturalists' Club, and last, but certainly not least, the Friends of the Farm (FCEF).

When he became Lead Hand and began to review past files, Jeremy was amazed to see the breadth of projects originated and supported by the FCEF.

"They are the movers and shakers," he stated. "We tend to look ahead to all the tasks facing us, but the records show that the FCEF has accomplished a remarkable amount."

A very enviable job

Jeremy speaks with a sense of awe when he describes the vital, living history of the Farm, its priceless research records, and its role as a quiet oasis in the middle of the city. He is devoted to the preservation of the historical collection of plant matter, and the land that nurtures it. But he also looks to the future.

He is enthusiastic about introducing new plant varieties and showcasing innovative techniques for the education of the public. He looks to his "super-



R. Hinchcliff

enthusiastic staff" to help him achieve this. "They are always trying out new plants, and love to swap stories about successes and failures." Another of his long-term goals is to make the Ornamental Garden more accessible.

Although Jeremy recognizes that day-to-day work in the gardens may consist of many routine and dirty chores that seem never-ending (like the nearly three kilometers of edging done around the flower beds), he is the first to admit that his is a very enviable job.

"I get to play in the dirt!" he declares. "And as one of my teachers once said, playing in the dirt exfoliates the soul."

Joan Butcher is assistant editor of this newsletter.

Gardens Ottawa Update

By Eric Jones

Gardens Ottawa has been, up until now, an ad-hoc group of people representing Ottawa's garden groups, seeking to make the public more aware of the city's garden attractions and interests. It was involved in promoting Garden Days and the Garden Promenade and convened forums.

Now it has formally incorporated with a mission of being Ottawa's voice for gardens.

Gardens Ottawa wants Ottawa to be recognized and celebrated as "A City of Gardens." To help attain this goal Gardens Ottawa

organized a Garden Symposium on March 16. Its theme was "Living in a City of Gardens," and it was hosted by Councillor Mathieu Fleury.

Gardens Ottawa (www.gardensottawa.ca) will now organize the Garden Promenade, which promotes a variety of downtown Ottawa gardens ranging from Rideau Hall to the Central Experimental Farm. The Garden Promenade includes a weekly bus tour of some of the gardens, as well as other publicity to draw attention to gardens that are often overlooked as city attractions.

Perfecting Peonies

By Blaine Marchand

The peony garden at the Central Experimental Farm holds the largest Canadian collection of peonies created by Arthur Percy (A.P.) Saunders. He was born in London, Ontario, in 1869, to parents, William and Sarah Agnes, who were self-taught, enthusiastic botanists. William became the first Director of the Experimental Farms of Canada in 1886 and held this position until 1911. A.P. and his siblings (four brothers and one sister) were brought up in an atmosphere of horticulture and plant collection.

A cultured family, the Saunders were given to gatherings where various members played musical instruments, sang songs, and recited poetry. A.P. Saunders studied art in France and this training gave him a sense of colour that helped greatly when he began to work on hybridizing peonies.

Educated at the University of Toronto (BA), Göttingen/Berlin (Chemistry) and John Hopkins University (PhD), in 1900 he became a professor of chemistry at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York (about a four hour drive south of Ottawa). Originally founded in 1793 as the Hamilton-Oneida Academy, it was officially chartered in 1812 as a liberal arts college for men (which it remained until the 1960s).

At Hamilton, where A.P. was provided with a house on College Hill that included space for a garden, he began growing plants, including peonies. He immediately started detailed garden notebooks which he maintained throughout his long life.

Peonies require a period of cold dormancy and the climate of northern New York state was ideal. As a result, about 1905, Saunders began to focus on growing peonies. At that time, he already had 248 plants in his gardens, many sent by growers from around the world.



A.P. Saunders, aged 38.

Western University Archives



'Ellen Cowley'

R. Hinchliff



'Alexander Woolcott'

R. Hinchliff

A.P. started his systematic work on species hybrids in 1917. He had perfected his hybridization techniques at the Experimental Farm. During one visit in 1928, Saunders took pollen from

P. coriacea, a species peony from Spain and the mountainous regions of Morocco. He later received a division of the plant itself and began hybridizing, crossing the hybrids

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Perfecting Peonies ... (continued from Page 6)

Lindsay D'Acoust



'Silvia Saunders'



'Grace Root'

Lindsay D'Acoust

Western University Archives



Silvia Saunders, aged 9.



Silvia Saunders

The Peony Society, www.peonysociety.eu

-*P. albiflora* and *P. coriacea*. In 1939, this resulted in a group of peonies with single to semi-double flowers of a most unusual colour - lavender.

Professor Saunders was a popular teacher. Students nicknamed him "Stinky" due to the smells that emanated from experiments in his chemistry lab. He was often seen driving about the college in his Model A Ford roadster, in winter wearing a raccoon coat and sometimes a straw hat. Students gathered in his house to listen to string quartets and to sit around him in the cluttered library as he read aloud from books.

He, in turn, was very fond of Hamilton College. There is evidence of this in some of the names he gave to his peonies. Examples include:

'Ellen Cowley' (Saunders 1940 - a semi-double hybrid of a deep bright cherry.)

The daughter of Hamilton College president, William Harold Cowley, Ellen Cowley was born at 8 am on the morning of graduation day of the class of 1940. Her father went straight from the hospital to the commencement ceremony at 10 am. It is said while he made it through the service, in his excitement he did mix up a few diplomas. To honour the event, Saunders named a new hybrid after the new baby daughter.

'Alexander Woolcott' (Saunders, 1941 - a semi-double hybrid of a shining crimson.)

Alexander Humphreys Woolcott, a graduate of Hamilton College, was a renowned American critic and commentator for *The New Yorker*, as well as a member of the infamous Algonquin Round Table. He gained fame for his witty and acerbic observations, becoming the most quoted man of his generation. He died suddenly in 1943, having suffered a stroke in the middle of radio broadcast. He is buried in the Hamilton College cemetery. The peony named after him is considered a planting companion to 'Ellen Cowley'.

'Grace Root' (Saunders, 1940 - a single hybrid of clear light salmon pink)

Grace Cogswell Root was married to Edward W. Root, a professor of art appreciation at Hamilton College. Professor Root's grandfather, Oren Root, had purchased a house near the College and built an extensive garden. Grace and Edward expanded and developed the garden, which became known as The Glen. After her husband's death, Grace created the Root Glen Foundation to ensure that the garden remained a place of beauty open to the public. In 1971, Grace transferred ownership of The Glen to Hamilton College. Among the plants found in the 7.5-acre garden are 19 herbaceous and 49 tree peonies hybridized by A.P. Saunders.

'Silvia Saunders' (Saunders, 1921 - semi-double hybrid of bright clear rose-pink, fading lighter toward the center)

The daughter of A.P. and Louise Saunders, Silvia Saunders was born in 1901 and raised on College Hill. After working as a commercial artist and a photographer in New York, she returned to Hamilton in 1951 to take care of her parents and help her father with his hybrid peony business. Continuing the Saunders tradition, their home was opened for cultural and musical evenings and annual Christmas parties. In 1995, on the first anniversary of her death, the Saunders family home was dedicated in her honour and became a student residence. Silvia Saunders is buried next to her parents in the Hamilton College cemetery.



Blaine Marchand will be talking about A.P. Saunders and his peonies on June 4 at the Farm (see page 4 and www.friendsofthefarm.ca/event/peony-lecture/).

Gift

(A.P. Saunders pauses before he begins hybridization, Clinton, NY, 1917.)

Sable brush in hand,
 amid cupped peonies drenched
 in sunlight, iridescent as fine china,
 the memory of my father
 blooms. So devoted
 to this flower he had three beds,
 each with three neat rows,
 curved into the expanse of lawn at the Farm.
 This shimmer of him in his prime
 is sweet, infused, tinged
 with fragrance -
 honey and rose, musk and lemon.
 Industrious bees, diligent,
 as he always was, hover,
 their wingbeat vibrations shaking down
 the gold dust frit of pollen.
 He taught me so much -
 careful observation to ensure best choice,
 dexterity to transfer the gilt grains
 from plant to plant, stamen to stigma,
 patience as nature does its work
 and the need to jot note after note.
 The peony is mythic with romance,
 promises a happy marriage and honor,
 and he was blessed with that
 as am I. But born with a painter's eye
 and a scientific disposition, I imagine more -
 the gift of grander beauty, earlier flowering,
 as yet unseen dazzling colours,
 assured that with assist from a skilled hand
 the plants of earth will respond
 and reward us with radiance,
 offer moments of calm and solace
 amid the uncertainty, the griefs life brings.

By Blaine Marchand

Consider joining the Friends of the Farm!

Find our membership form on the website and pay by PayPal or send in a cheque:

www.friendsofthefarm.ca/become-a-member/.

Benefits include discounts on Master Gardener lectures hosted by the Friends, one free adult admission per visit to the Canada Agriculture and Food Museum, quarterly printed newsletters by post, and monthly Farm Notes e-newsletters.

We also accept donations to support our activities and events, which also support the garden teams that maintain the cherished Ornamental Gardens. A variety of donations can be made through our webpage:

www.friendsofthefarm.ca/donations/.



Finding Joy in the Peony Patch

By Nancy Irving

When I first joined the Friends of the Central Experimental Farm (FCEF) peony team in the spring of 2014 I had no idea how much joy I'd derive from this relationship and from this amazing family of plants.

I was nearing retirement and looking for new experiences for this next stage of life. Since I was an avid gardener, a life member of the FCEF, and a nearby resident, I enquired about volunteer opportunities on the Farm. The peony team, I learned, was looking for new recruits for its weekly Thursday morning work party.

I then had only two of the plants in my own garden - a 'Sarah Bernhardt' and a 'Festiva Maxima'. They are both beautiful and highly fragrant, but they were just two among many plants I adored in my perennial borders. However, additional hands were needed in the peony patch and mine were available. I accepted the invitation, not really knowing what to expect. Five years later, I look back on that decision with delight and cherish my ongoing association with the Peony Team.

Much of the credit goes to our team leader, Bill Wegman. Bill's enthusiasm for peonies is infectious, his knowledge is encyclopedic, and his mentorship is generously offered. I've also learned a great deal from long-standing volunteer Blaine Marchand, who is a past-president of the Canadian Peony Society. Blaine is also director of gardens for the FCEF. Thanks largely to Bill and Blaine, I now have a much keener appreciation for the diversity and wonders of peonies.

I now know, for example, that my own 'Sarah Bernhardt' and 'Festiva Maxima' plants are old-fashioned beauties called herbaceous peonies (and sometimes also described as *lactifloras*). I have also become acquainted with Itoh peonies, also known as

intersectional peonies. A cross between herbaceous and tree peonies, Itohs are big, beautiful plants with poetic names such as 'Singing in the Rain', 'Going Bananas', and 'Magical Mystery Tour', to name but a few. I now have two lovely Itohs in my own garden ('Singing in the Rain' and 'Julia Rose').

I have also become a much better gardener of peonies: more proficient at staking, hooping, weeding, dead-heading, transplanting, and otherwise caring for the plants. And with every visit to the peony patch when the plants are in bloom, I marvel anew at the extraordinary variation in the shape, size, and colour of their flowers - from the deepest reds to the most delicate yellows. I'm also now enjoying the pleasure of sharing my new-found (albeit still limited) knowledge with others, especially during the annual guided tour of the peony beds for members of the public. The tour is part of the annual June Blooms event at the Farm's Ornamental Gardens. It provides an opportunity for visitors to learn about the Gardens' history, to identify many of the species of plants, and to ask questions of the Friends volunteers. I greatly enjoy that interaction with fellow gardening enthusiasts and other Farm visitors.

Working in the peony patch has not only enriched my appreciation and knowledge of the plants, it has opened my eyes to the delights of gardening as a team



Polly McCoil

Nancy Irving

sport. In my own backyard, I usually work solo, occasionally enlisting my husband's help with the heavy lifting. As a member of the peony team, I've had the opportunity to meet fun and engaging people, and the pleasure of working alongside them with the sun on our backs and our hands in the dirt—all in the service of these glorious perennials.

As I write this, I am looking out the window at my own back garden buried under a metre of snow. But I'm comforted by the knowledge that it won't be too long before I'm back among the peonies with my friends for a sixth season of gardening joy.

Nancy enjoyed a long career with the federal Department of Justice in the criminal law area. She retired in 2014 as a General Counsel in the Public Prosecution Service of Canada.



The Friends of the Central Experimental Farm is a volunteer organization committed to the maintenance and protection of the Ornamental Gardens and the Arboretum of the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Membership for the Friends of the Farm costs \$30 per year for an individual, \$50 per year for a family, \$25 for seniors/students. Payment by PayPal available on website. Membership fees support the many projects of the Friends of the Farm.

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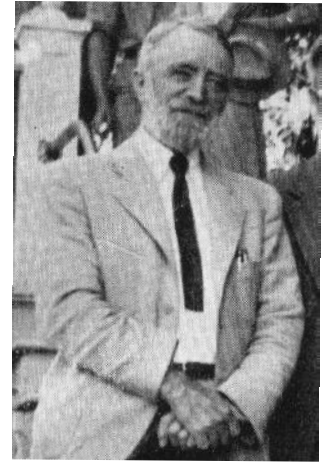
Creating New Peonies

By Blaine Marchand



Saunders peony 'Early White'.

R. Hinchcliff



A. P. Saunders, 1934.

Elsie Pomeroy, William Saunders and His Five Sons



Reiner Jakubowski, 2010.

Adriana,
www.southernpeony.com

Arthur Percy (A.P.) Saunders, over his long career as a peony hybridizer, had over 17,224 seedlings in his gardens. He propagated and named only 271 of these tree peonies, hybrids, and species peonies. And only 11 were officially registered. He sold or gave away an additional 15 of his peonies as unnamed seedlings and these were later named by other peony enthusiasts. So, it is important to realize, as Saunders did, that not every peony seedling is worth naming.

Bringing order to chaos

The American Peony Society (APS) is responsible for registering new introductions using the International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants, guidelines published by the International Society for Horticultural Science. At its very beginning, in 1903, the APS was interested in bringing order to the chaos that was peony nomenclature. Initially, the Society worked with Cornell University and its own members to determine which peonies were worth keeping in commerce. A.P. Saunders was involved in this phase as he was then Secretary of the Society. One of his responsibilities was publishing the lists of

peonies in commerce in the Society's Bulletin.

Since 2004, Reiner Jakubowski, former President of the Canadian Peony Society (CPS), has been APS Registrar and is the organization's third-longest serving registrar. In a recent interview, Mr. Jakubowski explained that the key purposes of registration are achieving some control of the names and preventing duplication. As Registrar, he is not responsible for assessing the quality of the plant. Rather, he tries to ensure that the name being proposed by the breeder has not been used before. He does admit that despite attempts over the years, duplicate names have occurred for various reasons, including alternate spellings of names.

Mr. Jakubowski noted that the number of peonies registered annually has gone from 11 in 2009 to 86 in 2018. Over the last nine years, hybridizers in the United States have led the way in registering new introductions with 176 offerings. Growers in Sweden registered 51, Canada and Germany each registered 37, Austria and China 17, the Ukraine and the Netherlands 7, followed by 2 in Slovakia and 1 each in Norway and New Zealand. Over the past 100 years, most of the important breeding

work of peonies has been done in the US. Many of the lineages of today's introductions can be traced back to A.P. Saunders.

Creating new peonies

Mr. Jakubowski believes that if gardeners are interested in breeding peonies, they should give it a try. There are two ways to create new peonies. One way is to collect the seeds produced by open pollination of peonies, done by bees, or through the seed program offered by the American and Canadian peony societies. Seeds can be planted either directly in the ground or put in individual baggies of vermiculite and placed in a fridge. It is important to know that peony seeds require a two-stage dormancy – first warm and moist during which time they grow a root as temperatures dip a bit in the autumn, followed by a cold period. Information on germinating peony seeds can be found at <http://canadianpeonysociety.blogspot.com/2013/06/controlled-germination-of-peony-seeds.html>.

A.P. Saunders once said: "The actual process of fertilization... with the peony

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Creating New Peonies ... *(continued from Page 10)*

(is) easy. You simply bring some pollen on one plant and put it on the stigma of a flower of another plant, and leave nature to do the rest." So following his lead, the second option is to choose which peonies you wish to cross. This other way to create a new peony, in Mr. Jakubowski's view, is the most satisfying because seeds are produced through controlled pollination, i.e. you choose which two peonies you want to cross. Quebec peony seller Manon Capano has an excellent site for beginner hybridizers, http://www.pivoinescapano.com/en_html/peonybreeding.

Mr. Jakubowski stressed that it is important to use good breeding stock. Peonies that have aesthetic appeal (colour, bloom, form, foliage) and are known to be fertile are the best bet, since not all peonies are fertile. By looking at the parentage used

by breeders, beginners will be able to choose good potential peony parents. Information on good breeds of peonies can also be found by contacting either Mr. Jakubowski or myself at info@friendsofthefarm.ca.

How to register a new peony

Before one can register a seedling that seems worthy, it is important that there be more than one plant. Registration costs just \$25 US. A visit to the APS website (<https://www.americanpeonysociety.org>) and a click on the Cultivar Reg. tab will provide details about the traits or characteristics of the peony that need to be recorded during the growing season. Mr. Jakubowski recommends breeders not rely on memory as some requirements must be measured. A photograph of the

peony to be named is also helpful. Once accepted, the information on the peony and a photograph is published in the quarterly APS Bulletin.

Between 2017 and its founding in 1903, the APS has registered 2,786 peonies. Mr. Jakubowski estimates there are 11,000 to 12,000 peonies in the APS database. Peonies introduced prior to 1923 are not registered but are part of the record and contained in the registry. He believes there are many more peonies being grown, since this plant's enthusiasts do not always register their introductions. So, there are any number of peonies which are unknown to the APS or are lacking reliable documentation.

Blaine, a volunteer on the Friends' peony team, has about 600 peonies in his own collection.

Lindsay D'Aoust



'Marie-Victorin' peony by Maurice Ménard (see page 12).



Mary Pratte and George Vorauer, 2007, when the peonies named in their honour were planted in the Gardens (see page 12).

In Planning Mode - Ottawa Hospital's New Civic Campus

By Eric Jones

The planning stages of a new Ottawa Hospital site, to be built on a 50-acre section at the northeast corner of the Central Experimental Farm property, have begun. First steps include tasks to satisfy federal, provincial and city requirements for the new site.

As part of the federal government's lease requirements, the Hospital is now responsible for maintaining the site to ensure it continues to be a safe environment for users. The Hospital will also be meeting various federal regulations, e.g. all new signs on the property will comply with Government of Canada standards. The Hospital will also deal with the remaining section of the Carling Building, sometimes called the Annex, which it seems will likely be dismantled.

To meet conditions set out by the City of Ottawa, the Hospital will be letting contracts for major studies in two areas: a

Transportation and Mobility Plan and a Service and Environmental Plan. The former will include a parking strategy, demand management, and vehicle access. Contracts will be awarded in April, and the studies are expected to take two-to-three years to complete.

The Ottawa Hospital has set up a Campus Engagement Group (CEG) to advise them on issues relating to the new campus. This is not the only source of input to the planning and design process but it is a key one for the community. The Friends of the Farm are represented on the CEG, as are representatives from nearby community associations and interest groups.

We will continue to provide information as it becomes available.

A Place of Honour

By Blaine Marchand

When Friends of the Central Experimental Farm (FCEF) volunteers are working in the peony beds on Thursday mornings, visitors often stop and ask if there are any peonies in the garden that carry their own names or those of family members. Peony names often do have an emotional or sentimental aspect, as they are chosen to pay homage to loved ones or notable persons.

Two peony names that resonate strongly for the FCEF are 'Mary Pratte' and 'George Vorauer'. Mary and George were dedicated and fondly-remembered volunteers who shaped the Farm's peony garden after the devastating winter of 2000. They rebuilt the garden and amassed an extraordinary collection of plants. They reintroduced peonies that had died or been lost through the years, and began to plant Canadian-bred peonies. Most notably, they started a collection of the peonies that had been developed and introduced by Arthur Percy (A.P.) Saunders, the son of the Farm's first director, William Saunders. A.P. Saunders was one of the most important hybridizers of peonies in the 20th century.

Where did the peonies that honour Mary and George originate? They were bred by a Quebec gardener with a passion for peonies – Maurice Ménard. Born in Montreal in 1916, his interest in gardening began in childhood when he decided to grow vegetables. In 1938, at age 18, he planted some roses and his first peonies – 'Festiva Maxima', 'Monsieur Jules Elie',



Maurice Ménard

and 'Karl Rosenfield'. He went on to work for the post office for 37 years, gardening in his leisure hours. At one time, he acquired apple tree stock from the Experimental Farm to use for grafting purposes.

Upon retirement in 1974, Mr. Ménard turned his hobby into a full-time occupation. He enthusiastically took courses on seedlings, cuttings, and transplanting. He took particular interest in the growing and hybridization of hybrid and intersectional peonies, which he continued until 2000. He registered four with the American Peony Society (APS), but these are not in commerce. Like A.P. Saunders, he would sometimes sell his seedlings. In the spring of 1998, Lindsay D'Aoust of Hudson Quebec purchased some, and grew them on to maturity.

Mr. Ménard passed away in 2002.

Among the Ménard peonies to be found in the Farm's garden, in addition to 'Mary Pratte' and 'George Vorauer', are 'Adrienne Clarkson', named for Canada's 26th Governor General, and 'Marie-Victorin', to honour the noted Québec botanist and founder of le Jardin botanique de Montréal. These were released during annual general meetings of the Canadian Peony Society (CPS) held



'Prosperity Maude'

R. Hinchcliff



'Mary Pratte'

Lindsay D'Aoust

at Rideau Hall and at le Jardin botanique de Montréal. Other Ménard peonies at the Farm are 'Prosperity Maud', 'Catherine Louise' and 'Mary Contrary'. It is truly fitting that Canadian peonies are being given their place of honour in our national capital's important and impressive peony garden.

Gardening and Other Opportunities

Come and enjoy at close quarters our very special Ottawa greenspace. Join the Friends of the Farm's volunteer teams this year in the Ornamental Gardens, Arboretum, and Merivale Shelterbelt.

Gardening begins in early May so get your forms in. To obtain a volunteer form, please visit our website at <https://friendsofthefarm.ca/volunteer/> or call the office at 613-230-3276.

There are also many non-gardening volunteer opportunities for you to apply your skills or learn new ones, work on your own or in a team. Please contact us at volunteer@friendsofthefarm.ca. We hope to see you at the Farm!