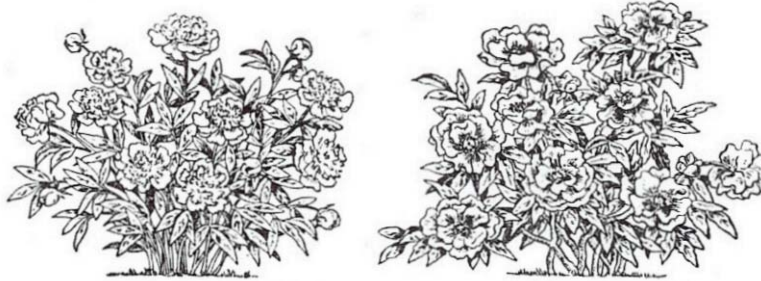


# An Intersectional Point of View

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Herbaceous

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Tree Peony

## *Intersectional Peonies Finally Come of Age*

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Intersectional peonies have been in the hearts and minds of many peony enthusiasts since their initial introduction to the public by Louis Smirnow in the late 1960's and their popularity has been steadily growing ever since. Unfortunately, extremely high demand for these new hybrids coupled with short supplies have combined to keep prices very high. Naturally, the high prices have severely limited distribution and this in turn has been a key factor in the somewhat slower than expected growth in their popularity. Nevertheless, there is mounting evidence that these hybrids are finally catching on. Each year and every new issue of the Bulletin seems to bring additional proof of their growing popularity as ads appear from more and more nurseries that are now offering intersectional hybrids. This increased competition is beginning to nudge the prices a bit lower and certainly this trend will continue as supplies and suppliers both continue to grow.

This year alone, there were two new books on peonies and each included a substantial section on the intersectional hybrids. Another clear measure of their growing popularity and acceptance was the recent selection of BARTZELLA as the Gold Medal winner for 2006, thereby also making it the Flower of the Year for 2007. It is my understanding that this outstanding variety was never previously nominated for the Gold Medal only because it failed to meet two of the key award criteria. Specifically, the criteria, which requires that all nominees, be both widely available and reasonably priced. This year, the majority of the Board of Directors seemed to feel that this variety was so outstanding with respect to

all of the other criteria that it deserved to be nominated for the Gold Medal despite the fact that it remains quite expensive and is still somewhat less than “widely available”. This selection is a clear testament to the extraordinary popularity of this truly remarkable peony and will obviously have a significant impact on the already high demand for this plant. On the negative side, this will undoubtedly also tend to keep the price of this cultivar at or near current levels for at least the next few years. More importantly, however, this selection represents another major milestone in the brief history of the intersectional peonies. The selection of BARTZELLA for the APS’s highest award marks the second time in recent years that an intersectional hybrid has been added to this very special list of elite peonies. You might recall that Don Hollingsworth’s GARDEN TREASURE was previously awarded the Gold Medal, back in 1996.

I would expect this latest Gold Medal selection to provide a significant boost in the demand for other intersectional peonies as well. In addition, I believe it is also another significant step towards establishing the intersectional hybrids to their rightful place as the third major peony group, alongside the tree peonies and herbaceous types. At this point, the limited availability of these hybrids seems to be the only real obstacle standing in the way. With the continued success of new micro-propagation techniques, supplies should soon catch-up with the ever-increasing demand for these plants and prices should finally begin to approach the affordable range.

As the beauty of these plants and their usefulness in the landscape are more widely recognized and appreciated, demand for these hybrids will continue to grow. Their appeal will also increase, as more and more new varieties in an ever-wider assortment of colors and flower forms are slowly introduced and made available to the gardening public. However, only when prices become substantially more affordable will these new peonies finally achieve the universal popularity, which they so justly deserve.