A Brief History of Peonies
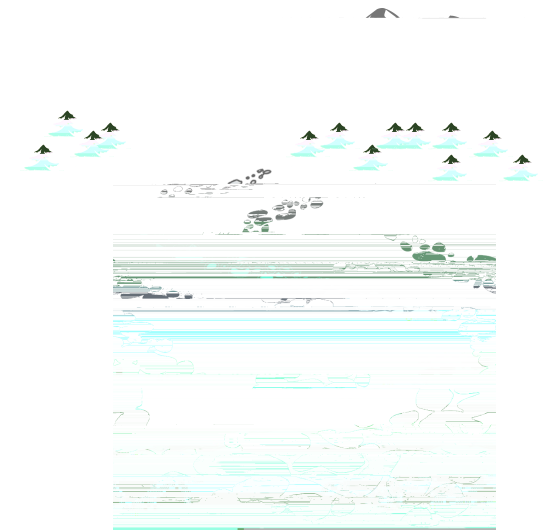
The peony, genus Paeonia, is a flowering plant native to Asia, Europe and Western North America. Its popularity dates back to 1,000 BC in the gardens of China. The the first tree peony came to Europe in the late 1700s and became widely popular as an ornamental flower.

Peony plants in gardens today are hybrids of original varieties and grow to 1–3 ft tall. They have compound, deeply lobed leaves and large, often fragrant flowers, in various colors including purple, pink, red, white, and yellow. Peonies are popular garden plants in temperate regions that bloom in late spring and early summer. They are also sold as cut flowers on a large scale around the world.

In Alaska, peonies have been grown as a garden flower since the early 1900s after the Klondike and Alaska Gold Rush brought many people north seeking fortunes and land. Peonies were planted occasionally in home gardens, but the roots were difficult to keep alive during transport to Alaska. Once planted, they often were killed by the harsh conditions of Alaskan winters. Not until the 1970s were formal ornamental research trials conducted at the Fairbanks Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station at UAF to identify hardy species and cultivars as home landscape plants and eventually cut flowers.

Most Alaska soils require fertilizers to support high production. In 2001, the first research plots were planted at the Georgeson Botanical Garden to learn if peonies could be grown as cut flowers. They sought to learn how to grow them, explore potential markets, and help develop the infrastructure for Alaska's first horticultural export crop. Growers and researchers alike needed to learn how to grow peonies as cut flowers, identify locations in the state where they might grow, and which environmental and economic parameters might

Georgeson
Botanical Garden
PEONY MAP

Tour and discover our research peonies in the northernmost botanical garden in the US!

Found?	Number	Cultivar Name	Row	# of plants
_____	19124	Eskimo Pie	12	10
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