



## Exhibiting Peonies

Dana Tretheway – APS Director, Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA

The crowning jewel of the annual APS convention is without a doubt the live flower exhibit. Each year, this event brings anywhere from 250 to nearly 700 peonies to the American Peony Society's show tables. This spectacular display allows members and the general public to view some of the finest peonies grown in the United States and Canada, causing their wish lists to grow by leaps and bounds.

The exhibit is certainly an excellent advertisement opportunity for our commercial growers (Division I exhibitors), and therefore they attempt to bring to the tables as many of their available peonies as possible. Their contribution to the exhibit aids greatly in completing one of our missions: To promote and educate.

The exhibit isn't just for the professionals, though. Non-commercial peony enthusiasts and gardeners have their own competitive division and are highly encouraged to participate. This is the best way to show off your gardening efforts and gain a bit of bragging rights as you collect blue ribbons or perhaps a rosette or two from the Court of Honor. Amateur and novice participation has grown significantly over the last few years and finding showing peonies from their own gardens rewarding, educational and satisfying. In fact, in 2014 Division II exhibitors more than doubled the total of stems tabled from both 2010 and 2011 for the same division.

To ease the emotions and fears of first time exhibitors, a seminar is usually provided on Friday evening before the exhibit. The seminar covers all the rules for making proper entries and provides some helpful hints and tips.

Tips to get prospective exhibitors on the right track:

- Download a copy of the exhibition schedule from the APS website.
- Read articles on cutting and storing peonies at [hollingsworthpeonies.com](http://hollingsworthpeonies.com), [peonyparadise.com](http://peonyparadise.com) and in American Peony Society Bulletin #369.
- Bring personal mailing labels with you; they speed up the completion of entry cards.
- Ensure you keep track of the name of your peonies as you cut them; you'll be embarrassed when you discover you don't have the name of one of your cultivars.
- Using the exhibit schedule, identify in which classes your peonies will be exhibited ahead of time.

### **What the judges look for:**

#### **Color**

- Clear and vibrant
- Clean and Fresh
- Multi-colors should be harmonious

**Texture**

- Silken sheen, velvety or satiny petals
- Lack of sheen, sparkle or flow are faults

**Stem and Foliage**

- Stems should be straight and sufficient strength
- Foliage is not judged so should be removed

**Condition and Grooming**

- Fully mature and peak condition
- Fallen pollen indicates past prime
- Watch for bruised petals and dark spots
- Side buds must have been removed

**Distinction**

- For classes exhibiting collections
- Broad range of types and colors

**Correct Cultivar and Class**

- Division I disqualified if tabled incorrectly
- Division II corrected on the spot if possible (if variety can be positively identified)

For those who are interested in Artistic Floral Design, a separate exhibition is held at the same time. The rules of this competition and classes are provided in the exhibition schedule.

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