



Fall Peony Seed Harvest & Treatment

Help Support APS Seed Distribution Program (SDP) through a donation. About this time each year peony seeds begin to ripen in their carpels (pods) and may be harvested for the gardener/hybridizer or the American Peony Society's Seed Distribution Program. The Program's seed distribution this year has been heavy and is asking for seeds of all types for the program.

- 1) Anyone can donate. No matter how large or small your garden, you may have plants that produce seed that someone else may want to acquire through the SDP.
- 2) What to look for. Look for ripe carpels that are changing color from green to yellow/orange/red/brown and are beginning to split along their midline.
- 3) NOTE: Many peonies produce infertile seed-like ovules. Viable seeds will be hard and firm to a hard 'pinch'. Any seed that is soft will not grow. Seeds will also not be wrinkled or wafer-like after drying.
- 4) Collect the entire seed head by cutting it off if ripe. Place carpels in a dry location, on top of a piece of paper with the cultivar's name written on it, to dry for a few days. Do not harvest green pods that are not beginning to split, as seeds may not be developed enough. Collecting seed from plants that have open carpels on plants is fine, but can be challenging if seeds begin falling onto the ground. Named cultivars are most desired, as this will help users of the SDP to make choices.
- 5) Remove seeds from carpels after a few days and allow them to dry further for another few days.
 - a. Seed colors and characteristics:
 - i. *P. lactiflora* cultivars (common herbaceous garden peony) will likely be tan or brown in color and be may be flat on each side or round
 - ii. Herbaceous hybrid peonies will likely produce black or dark brown seeds and be round, although some may be oblong.
 - iii. Herbaceous peony species seed is variable in color and may be brown, blue or black. Many species have red unfertilized ovules that are not viable seeds, but are quite ornamental. Seeds shapes may be round or oblong depending on the species parents
 - iv. Woody peony (tree peony) seeds from *suffruticosa* or *rockii* lineage plants are generally brown or black in color. They may be round or have slightly flatten sides.
 - v. Itoh or intersectional peonies seldom if ever produce viable seeds. We recommend avoiding donation of suspected seeds from these plants.
- 6) Place seeds in any paper envelope with the cultivar's name written on it. Large quantities of seeds are welcome.
- 7) Donors of seeds have the option of selecting free packets of seeds donated by other donors.
- 8) Mail seeds to:

American Peony Society Seed Distribution Program
Attn: Scott Parker
23409 Desoto Avenue
Tomah, WI 54660-4272