



American Peony Society

Award of Distinction

Recognizing Excellence and Advancement in the Genus *Paeonia*

Information & Procedures

The Award of Distinction recognizes peonies which exhibit unique and valuable advancements in plant and flower characteristics. The award may be applied to any type of peony and especially woody peonies, with a special focus on rare and commercially emergent cultivars which are deserving of greater exposure. Through this award the Society's purpose is supported by forwarding the peony through education and exposure to unique and high-quality cultivars which have not yet become widely available. Awarded cultivars are not limited to new introductions and may be older introductions which have not received widespread exposure.

The Award is dedicated to hybridizers who have developed peony cultivars which have advanced the genus through their thoughtful work.

The American Peony Society selects the Award of Distinction based on the "Observable Considerations" described below. Cultivars receiving this award, may later be eligible for the Gold Medal Award, as they become more widely available and/or market price meets the award's criteria.

OBSERVABLE CONSIDERATIONS

I. Flower Consistency

1. Flower, size, color and other attributes are produced reliably each bloom season.
2. Resistant to variable climate conditions (late freezes, rainfall, temperatures, etc...).
3. Buds are to be clean and closed during development - prior to opening.
4. Flowers are consistent in areas in which peonies are normally grown.
5. Acceptable bloom can be expected after no more than 5 years after planting.

II. Plant Consistency

1. Foliage remains in reasonably good condition throughout the spring and summer.
2. The overall plant habit will be consistent in areas in which a cultivar can be reasonably grown.
3. Stem habit is adequate without creating a "sprawling effect".
4. Recent introductions will exhibit improved plant habits over similar cultivars introduced to commerce.

III. Ease of Culture

1. Plants are resistant to disease in normal growing situations
2. Growth rate is average or better (4 to 6 years to become a visually appealing plant).
3. No specialized siting or conditions are required to grow this plant beyond what is normally needed for peony growth.
4. The cultivar will have been grown successfully in more than 1 climate region in which similar peonies have performed well.

IV. Availability & Propagation

1. The ICRA registration record is 5 years or older. (see Peony Registry)
2. Is available from at least 1 source and is not limited by annual availability. Note: Most often available from specialty nurseries.
3. No price limitations are part of evaluation, although prices should be reasonable for most collectors of new and/or rare cultivars.
4. May be reliably propagated without specialized techniques, beyond what is considered acceptable for similar types of peonies. Example: Woody peonies are often grafted, which is not considered a specialized technique, as it is a widely used propagation method.

V. Distinction

1. Flowers express improvement and/or uniqueness compared to similarly introduced cultivars.
2. Unique qualities may include: flower color, flower form, flower size, fragrance, abundance of bloom, foliage, plant habit or any number of other traits.

NOMINATION AND SELECTION PROCEDURES

I. Cultivar Nominations

1. A single member may submit up to 3 cultivar nominations through website or an email to the Awards Committee Chair.
2. Members submitting nominations will have firsthand experience with the cultivars they are nominating. Nominations will not be based on images, other's opinions, polls, popularity, bouquets, social media posts or any other non-firsthand resource. However, it is acceptable to nominate a cultivar viewed in another garden.
3. Member submissions for cultivar nominations are due no later than the date assigned and published by the Awards Committee. Any nominations submitted after the assigned due date will be recorded for evaluation the following year.
4. Cultivars will reasonably meet the "Observable Considerations" (OC).
5. Nominations of cultivars previously awarded the Gold Medal and/or the Award of Distinction will be discarded.
6. Cultivars must be listed within the APS Peony Registry.
 - Seedlings, garden named plants, historic cultivars and trade-named cultivars not found within the Peony Registry are ineligible for award consideration and will be discarded.

II. Awards Committee Cultivar Selection Procedures

1. The Awards Chair will record all cultivar nominations and add them to previously submitted nominations, unless they are absent from the Peony Registry or have already received the Gold Medal or Award of Distinction.
2. The Awards Chair will distribute a list of previously and currently nominated cultivars to the Awards Committee for review and commentary (prior to their meeting).
3. The Awards Committee will convene to discuss, evaluate and rank the nominated cultivars.
4. Upon initial review, nominated cultivars may be eliminated, prior to further evaluation, if they obviously will not rise to Award of Distinction status. Eliminated cultivars will be recorded by the Awards Chair for future reference.
5. Nominated cultivars which have not been eliminated, are preview ranked into groups. Preview ranking relies upon committee members' experience and assists in identifying the best quality cultivars for formal evaluation. Preview ranking requires nominated cultivars to be placed into 3 groups.
 - a. Group 1: The cultivar is likely to meet all OC criteria.
 - b. Group 2: The cultivar likely meets most OC criteria, or have a minor flaw which may not be evident in all growing locations, or may not have a great impact on overall qualifications.
 - c. Group 3: The cultivar does not meet 3 or more criteria or has notable flaws in relationship to the OC.
6. Group 1 and 2 cultivars become candidates for the Seidl Award of Excellence. Group 3 cultivars are eliminated and are not formally evaluated.
7. Group 1 candidates, from preview ranking, are formally evaluated using the Ranking Checklist. No other preview group candidates will be evaluated if 3 or more candidates from Group 1 meet the OC criteria. Group 2 candidates may be evaluated if not enough candidates from Group 1 meet OC criteria.
8. Any candidate the Awards Committee identifies as lacking supporting high quality photographic resources may be placed on HOLD until resources are identified.
9. The top 3 ranked candidate selections will be forwarded to the APS Board of Directors, by the Awards Chair, for final determination of the award.
10. Candidate selections forwarded to the Board of Directors will meet selection criteria, any of which could suitably receive the award.
11. If the Award Committee determines no evaluated candidates meet OC criteria adequately, the Awards Chair will report to the Board of Directors for further instructions. In such cases, the Awards Committee will reconvene, using new instructions from the Board of Directors.

III. Board of Directors Cultivar Selection Procedures

1. Directors will review the candidates provided by the Awards Chair, prior to convening and determining of the award. This allows for familiarity of candidate cultivars and should result in a more informed choice. No other criteria will be employed to determine the Gold Medal Peony beyond those found within the OC criteria.
2. Upon Convening to determine the award the BOD will:
 - a. Engage in general discussion of the candidates.
 - b. Be provided procedural instructions by an Awards Committee representative to determine the Gold Medal Peony.
 - c. Perform a “voice vote” or other similar agreed upon method of voting to accumulate results. A roll call vote is recommended. See below for voting procedures.
 - d. Designate one Director of the BOD as a “vote tie breaker”. The “vote tie breaker” will not vote unless a tie exists. Recommendation: One of the Awards Committee members, if a director, will be assigned this role. Since committee members have already been involved with cultivar/candidate evaluation, they are familiar with each cultivar and will be able to make a well-informed choice to break a tie.
 - e. Use up to two rounds of voting to determine the award. The Awards Committee Chair or other designated representative will record the results of each round. Each director will vote for 1 cultivar per round.
 - i. Round 1: Reduce the field from 3 to 1 or 2 candidates.
 1. If a single candidate receives all of the votes during this round, the candidate is the award winner.
 2. If more than one candidate receives votes, the top 2 vote getters will proceed to round 2 (no matter the vote differential).
 3. If any combination of ties exists after voting, the designated “vote tie breaker” will determine a cultivar which does not move forward to the next round. *Results could include a 3-way tie, or 1 clear top vote getter and a 2-way tie for second. In either case, the “vote tie breaker” will be required to move candidates to round 2.
 - ii. Round 2: Reduce the field from 2 to 1 candidate. The candidate receiving the most votes will be the award winner.
 1. All Directors, whether their original choice was eliminated or not, will vote in this round.
 2. If a tie exists after voting, the designated “vote tie breaker” will determine the Gold Medal.
 3. The award winner is recorded by the Awards Chair, or designated representative, who will prepare information for organizational distribution.

Award of Distinction

1. Announced at the Annual Convention, through The Bulletin, Social Media and the APS Website.
2. The Award of Distinction is decided the prior spring to its announcement. This allows the Award Committee to produce supporting literature and media. Additionally, commercial outlets which sell the selection will have time to update and feature the peony within their outlets.

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