



American Peony Society 2020 Convention Survey Summary

February 7, 2021

The 2020 APS Convention scheduled for this June 11th – 14th is being delayed in planning due to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Many plant societies have either cancelled their 2020 convention or have planned a virtual online event instead. Last October, APS signed a contract with the Hilton in Bloomington and plans are initiated for a convention that includes tours, banquets, seminars and a flower show.

In helping the APS board decide on a course of action for the proposed convention, a survey was initiated to solicit feedback from members. Options for the 2020 convention include as follows:

1. Continue as planned
2. Cancel the 2020 Convention
3. If cancelled decide on whether or not to host an online virtual convention.

There are pros and cons to all possibilities and there have been questions asked.

What is our liability if we cancel now? (Approximately \$18,000 if cancelled before March 1st).

If cancelled, will the hotel hold APS liable for the \$18k since Minnesota currently has event restrictions? (Investigation will commensurate after board vote)

Will people attend if held and if not, will a virtual convention be acceptable?

The following survey results will help clarify the last question. Two questions were asked in a Mailchimp email survey campaign.

Number of emails sent – 760

Responses – 235

Question 1: Are you planning to register for the IN-PERSON American Peony Society Convention planned for June 11-14, 2021 in Bloomington, Minnesota?

Yes: 33
Maybe: 81
No: 111

Question 2: Would you register for a VIRTUAL American Peony Society Convention if the IN-PERSON Convention is cancelled due to COVID issues?

Yes: 154
No: 71

In addition, comments were asked and many responded. The following are the response comments.

Question 3: Do you have any other feedback for APS on the topic of this convention?

My age keeps me from traveling to the Minnesota event, BUT I would make an effort to attend if it were held in eastern Massachusetts at some time in the future.
Please make it easier to participate in your various offerings. It seems to be a "CLUB" mentality with favorites; and losers, who are not in the "know". This is going to ultimately damage your survival and membership.
I believe virtual would be the best for the safety of all who wish to attend.
After traveling recently from New York State to Los Angeles California travel is incredibly difficult at this point in history. I would not suggest or partake. The best to those who do of course. I would like this organization to thrive.
Let's hold the convention - downsize if need be. But let's do this for those who are ready - of course with safety measures. Masks to be worn except speakers and during dinners, etc.. Safe seating. We CAN do this safely!! I - WE NEED this!!!
Auction, yes!
Even if the pandemic turns in the right direction, it will not be certain as it is too soon and with all of the variant strains and vaccine roll out issues with supply and unknown effectiveness on new variants, too much is unknown to feel confident enough to attend. There are amazing things being done in virtual flower shows, some of these were done last summer on the East Coast. It is a safe way to have a show while awaiting the uncertainty of this health crisis.
Linette: Of course, there are many unknowns with the pandemic. I am no infectious disease expert, but as a physician, the projections I have seen regarding when precautions (masking/social distancing) could be lifted are 3rd or 4th quarter 2021. Any additional developments that are not known now (e.g., new strains that circumvent the vaccine, short duration of effectiveness of the vaccine) could certainly push it out longer. Much as I would like to see it, I do not see a path to eased precautions by second quarter 2021. An important point is that even vaccinated individuals can catch and spread the virus, even if the vaccine is effective in preventing symptoms. The path to abolishing precautions lies in extremely low community case numbers, not in the percentage of individuals vaccinated (though it will take a high percentage of the latter to achieve the former). Even after one is vaccinated, it is very important to continue masking/social distancing/hand-washing
2022 is our target for any air travel plans. Till then, virtual meetings are, and have been, great ways to connect with other societies we're part of. Thank you for asking our opinion. All our best, Larry & Wendy
better safe than sorry
It would be nice to see actual peony divisions, signs of infection for peonies, new peonies. a talk by Carol Alderman.
I think you are right. It is just too risky right now. Keep in mind President Biden thinks by the end of the summer, everybody will be vaccinated.
Travel is my biggest obstacle and Lockdowns.
We have family in St Paul and so would like to come. Also we expect to be vaccinated and so feel better. May drive from WA to MN.

I think it would be nice to schedule a couple of virtual talks or garden tours just to connect and to encourage folks to open their gardens to small groups if the hosts have been vaccinated and virus levels are down. These could be scheduled at the last minute. No buses needed, no meals. We need to have a very nimble set of events that can quickly be set up or cancelled. No flower show as that would require organizers and exhibitors to congregate even if visitors didn't. Or maybe a one person show... or several at various times around the country. Like Harvey shows cut flowers in his nursery building.

I miss all my peony friends.

The only reason we can't attend is because our daylily club is hosting the Regional (Kansas, Missouri & Oklahoma) and we are on tour in early July so we'll be getting the yard ready. We've had our first shot and most of our daylily group have had the first one. We have until March to decide to cancel the Regional (hotel, food, buses, etc.) It makes it so hard to plan. Otherwise, we would probably still attend the peony convention. I fully understand the concern.

There is too much uncertainty right at this time. I know there may be expenses incurred by cancelling the event but perhaps an auction would help defray some of the costs.

Would be very difficult to do a virtual exhibition because not everyone's cameras are equal. If people had to come to the site to show the flowers that would negate any safety.

I am living too far away

Stay safe. It's easier to plan for a definite Plan B ... a virtual show. Easier for organizers and for participants. In 2020 I read the peony photography tips in the APS journal and shot from a different angle. My photo did well in the Canadian virtual show. It was very engaging to see people's photos of their yards and their flowers. I'd like to see this all year round, from the first dramatic young shoots in snow. And you could have sub entries like: gardening mistakes I've learned from, or how I fell in love with peonies... in 100 words. Good luck.

We in Sweden are still restricted from travelling, so we cannot come even if we wanted.

Linette, I would not hesitate going on the garden tours or attending the peony show in a large convention room. Hope we have our shots by then so we would have no concerns. Jean

Not particularly interested in a virtual convention. It would depend on cost and time restraints at home.

I would love to attend in person, since I am fortunate enough to have received the covid vaccine. I also fully support the decision to not have an in person convention in 2021 depending on the state of the pandemic. Thank you for your work and consideration of all of the extraordinary factors involved...

If all else fails, have a online root auction.

Most clubs are still closing out the conventions that were having bus transportation to gardens. Oklahoma is supposed to have the Median Iris Society Convention with self driving to the gardens. I am going to that.

Yes, virtual is awesome! BTW the meeting in Syracuse is great, too. Will there be trips to Rochester? Years ago, the county horticulturists planted many different varieties of trees in the parks. Of course, the lilac gardens are great but maybe too early in May for a show. The soils are very fertile there. It is because of that city, that I write to you now.

Virtual does not work with my antiquated computer.

How would an online flower show work?

What kinds of electronic would be needed to participate visually as well as hearing? As for topics, is it feasible to include something leading to restarting the ALM judging process?
If you go virtual, how would you handle vendors?
As a new member I just need to be able to go to a live Convention.
The American Hosta Society had a virtual Garden Tour instead of the national convention scheduled for Minneapolis in 2020. It was not as good as the real thing. The Daffodil society virtual fall forum in 2020 was ok but the informal zoom chats were ðŸŽ.
Having a virtual conference would be the safest.
Hold the convention, take appropriate precautions and let individuals decide whether or not to attend. Looking forward to it.
Would love a virtual convention, good idea since I have not received the vaccine yet.
By keeping this to an all outside venue experience as a plan B option, could appease the overreaching measures forced on us common sense Minnesotans. Having an outdoor plan B option would be my vote (hint, hint if you are ever looking for another board person someday). The key though if holding events inside now is 50% occupancy of the fire code. This may be a pinch point based on your proposed venue. Setting up remote monitors could help by spreading out the attenders. What to do though with out state and international participants is a sore spot with this mess. It's almost like you have to do both in person and virtual by live streaming the entire event. Sad but go for it! Gardeners are clamoring to be outside and especially being able to see, smell and touch peonies! Case and point, last spring during our Peony Field Days, gardeners were delighted and thankful to be outside.
I'm all in favor of going virtual this time around.
I live in TN and travel would be difficult with or without the pandemic. I'd mainly go to a convention to shop or attend a lecture which is the only thing a virtual convention might bring. But not having been to a convention I don't know what the virtual seminars would be like
The site was too far for us to travel even without the pandemic.
1) People may not be allowed to fly pending airline decisions about vaccines 2) educational seminar would be great! 3) the flower show/awards... defer 4) this could be a wonderful opportunity to share farm videos, garden tour videos, large production international videos, Alaska grower videos, wholesale grower production process videos. 4) I can recommend Wired Production Group. Cedar Rapids Iowa for virtual events and video production
I wouldn't hesitate to attend but am already booked for a Tahoe real estate conference in July and have to visit my daughter in Wyoming sometime this summer.
We would love to go but it's hard for us to get away at that time. We will be harvesting and shipping peonies.
It looked like you had a great site. I was looking forward to the Swenson Gardens tour. I was there a couple of years ago and he had a wonderful selection of peonies.
we have no choice, all my work atelier are already canceled even open garden is limited to 6 visitors
I believe I will have been vaccinated by then.
I'm not certain I would register for a virtual convention as it would depend on timing and cost, but I would say 75% sure. It's always hard to take time away during prime gardening season.

I would appreciate virtual convention even without covid
How do you pay for a virtual convention? My peonies bloom in middle April. I have nothing to show in the middle of June. The guy in Arkansas is even earlier than me with his stuff. In Ames he won best in show. Just sayin
Let's do it with Covid management protocols.
So many of us are in the high risk group, it seems too soon to gather in crowds. This is NOT making me happy, but there's nothing anyone can do.
Given that the weather in June will be comfortable, could we do a real flower show outdoors for the benefit of the local public? (This would be in addition to any virtual show if the convention goes virtual.)
Why Minnesota?? Heart of COVID!!
I think it is too soon to do these events in person. Wish it wasn't so!
The iris society has ready canceled their convention
Really miss the conventions, will participate in as much as possible regardless of how it's held.
No preference between the two (we'll be at the Farmers Market Saturday AM). If virtual, there might be better attendance. Maybe 2022 will start live & virtual convention (new normal).
I am concerned for the safety of MPS convention volunteers. Is there certainty that enough people would volunteer to be in rooms or halls for hours when the convention is underway? Or even the meetings held prior? It concerns me that holding out for an in-person event is coming down to a financial reason - that the APS is going to lose money if the convention is not held. Could this be true?
I am in hopes of an in person convention. The vast majority of us still go to work, the grocery store, Target, etc. Vaccinations are being dispensed, everyone is aware of masking and social distancing. Time for a peony convention!
Looking forward to the 2022 convention and an expanded peony auction this fall.
My answers may not be relevant as I am in Australia, not America, but possibly I am one of some who wish to learn. As time zones differ would it be possible to allow any lectures, discussions, etc. to be read or heard in "other" time. Not wishing to cause any complications, I appreciate how much time and effort goes into organizing anything like a convention. Anything is good.
Hopefully many more people will be vaccinated by June which will make the conference safe.
I attended a 3-day virtual conference via Zoom for the International Plant Propagators society that included individual presentations as well as tours through bot gardens and commercial greenhouses. It was fantastic. It's a lot of work but they teamed up with Extension personnel at K-State who helped with logistics. I'd love to see that and will offer to do a presentation on the Alaska peony industry if anyone is interested. But I do understand if it is too much.
If things are taped & I can view per my schedule, MAYBE

Speaking for my attendee self only, I prefer the camaraderie only an in person event can provide. Virtual events fall flat and are subject to technical difficulties. I attended a virtual PBS garden show screening Zoom party last week, where the only active participants were the producer and the host. It was supposed to be a group participant event, but most of us chose to be black screens and listen. I also attended a Master Gardener Education Zoom event that started with nearly a hundred participants, but ended with just a couple dozen. This event included separate "rooms" for discussion that failed miserably. Also, I hate Zoom.

As a scheduled participant in this years' convention, I like the virtual idea, if I can have lots of help. The attendees only see what I want them to. If it is pre-recorded, it can be edited as I tend to ramble and get too enthusiastic. Also, if delayed, a whole season of blooms could be included. Thanks for your hard work!!

I would come in person still if no buses. To see show and gardens if can drive myself. Not excited to be in large rooms or buses yet

Too soon for mass gatherings. Most of us will not be vaccinated yet, nor will workers who would be providing service at a convention. MPLS would be close but after last year's riots? Any metropolis in this political climate would be chancy.
Found my unmailed dues check. No wonder I haven't received anything!
Deb Bentley

I am new to the society so I really don't know anything about the convention! I think it would be fun to attend online if that works out!

The only way that I could attend the convention is if I have had a vaccine, and if enough others have one also. I don't think that is likely, so I probably will not attend, although I would love to. I do not care much for virtual conferences.

More importantly is our concerns about the PISS POOR GOVERNING of Minnesota

So much depends on the vaccine's effectiveness.

I'm new to the APS but have enjoyed being a member and look forward to seeing the convention either in person or virtual. Thank you for your hard work.

Thanks for trying to put this together in these challenging times!!!

My reason for not traveling is not directly because of the pandemic. I have other travel plans that have been put off that need to take priority.

Since it is our organization (Alaska Peony Society) that is a member, could we participate in the virtual convention and have it up on a screen so members can come and watch it?

Don't envy decision makers! Tough call.

I'd love to attend in person, but I feel that this year will still be too risky for me.

Unfortunately, I don't think that by June, we'll have enough of the public vaccinated to make people feel comfortable enough to travel & gather, for a convention. I know that unless there is a very quick turn around in the infection & death rates, especially with the new more aggressive strains showing up, I don't think you can chance it, I won't. If you have the convention & it's not well attended, it won't be worthwhile, especially for the amount of work it will take, & the financial risk. Let's face it, this isn't a group of 25 to 30 year olds, most of us aren't spring chickens, & as much as I yearn to actually get to sit down & talk to all of you, if someone got sick as a result of traveling & attending, everyone would feel horrible. As far as the VIRTUAL side of things, don't let me throw water on your ideas, but I have to tell you my experience with zoom meetings is they are a pain in the ass. If it's what you have to do to work, you do it, but it's not ideal. My 2 cents.

Thanks for all of your time trying to make plans! Since most of us are older, it isn't an easy call! (Those exact same 4 days I will be very involved with my granddaughters 4 day dance recital in Hudson, so I will be splitting my time between the two events-whatever that may look like come June!)

I reasonably expect to be vaccinated by July, so I plan to attend and have made [cancellable] reservations in optimistic hope that it will be safe to attend. If it must go VIRTUAL, a short convention would be better than none. Would welcome presentations and videos of some of the tour gardens! Thanks for everyone's hard work, and I appreciate how difficult the pandemic has made things for you!

Even though I have had the vaccine, I would not feel safe traveling at this point. There are too many changes in the virus, which may or may not be taken care of by the vaccines.

I would possibly be interested in a virtual Convention depending on the cost.

I have no concerns in regard to attending in-person convention.

As a former president of this fine society it saddens me to see us miss a second year of having the convention. However, I believe we as a nation need to have better control over this pandemic before we attempt any large group activity. I also realize the need to keep people active in the society and a virtual convention may do just that.

Everything depends on the pandemic in your country as of the moment we are better off where we are in New Zealand than in USA

If doing an on-line program, please choose a format that is compatible with Linux operating systems and Firefox or I won't be able to see in on my computer.

Even if the actual convention occurs, you could still combine a virtual convention for people who cannot physically make the trip.

With vaccinations running behind in Canada and some major international travel restrictions just recently being laid down for us here, I'm afraid it just wouldn't make sense to attend the convention as there is a possibility I could put the community of Bloomington at risk of exposure.