



Presidents Report

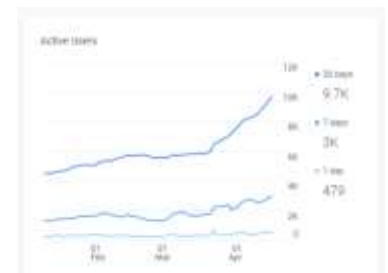
BOD Meeting 4.22.2021

Nate Bremer

I hope everyone is enjoying somewhat better spring weather and are keeping up with this extremely busy season. While the pandemic may be causing issues, it certainly has not slowed down people's appetite for peonies and related information. Personally, this has been one of the most challenging spring periods in which Kim and I have experienced due to the multitude of communications, planning and business related issues. Both of us are getting older and have less energy!

APS has been extremely busy as well – running “hot” as Kim notes.

- 1) **Staying current.** As we begin another year please remember the importance of checking and replying to email correspondence in a timely manner. The pandemic has created a very busy period for the society and our actions impact many members and BOD members. Thanks you very much for getting me through this first year of leadership and please do not hesitate to reach out if you have concerns.
- 2) **Thanks** go out to David and Linette Sorrentino for planning what would have been a wonderful convention in Minnesota. We have many members who have reached out to me indicating their disappointment, but understanding for cancellation. They are looking forward to 2024!
- 3) **Non-delivery of APS publications to EU members.** A number of EU members have reported they have not received the last Bulletin or prior Bulletin and others have not received the Directory of New Peony Cultivars. Kim has worked with Covington Press' mail house to look into any problems, but thus far has not come up with any red flags (we are sending out what is supposed to be sent). This places the blame on either USPS or individual country's mail services. Tracking individual bulk mail pieces is impossible, so there is no method to determine the location of these items or whether they were delivered. The pandemic's impact on shipping and mail services is likely at fault and there are reports that some mail items are in storage to be delivered at a later date. It is possible some items may be lost, non-delivered, stolen or the member inadvertently threw them away with “junk” mail – making this a difficult issue to deal with. Linette and Mike have sent a number of replacements over the last quarter and a number of members were asked to wait for delivery, in hopes that the items show up at a later date. Sending out replacements is time consuming of volunteers and expensive. Kim's question is do we want to take the member's word they did not receive the publication and continue the practice of replacement? One option may be that APS adopts the practice of “no delivery guarantee”. This is harsh, but may need to be implemented for at least our foreign members. Since the 5 latest Bulletins and the Directory of New Peony Cultivars is always available on the website's Member Portal, members do have them available in case of non-delivery. Thoughts?
- 4) The **website** continues to see much added traffic and is hosting our 2021 Virtual+ Convention “If Wishes Were Peonies”. Due to the size of the website (public and membership), bandwidth of use our hosting costs moved to the next level. We were paying \$30.00 per month hosting and the next level without our discount is \$75.00, our discount will make it \$50.00 per month, which is a good deal considering the website's traffic, storage size and bandwidth requirements. Analytics in image (9.7K last 30 days).
- 5) **“If Wishes Were Peonies”** is APS' version of the convention this year (Virtual+ Convention). Information concerning the convention can be seen on the website at: <https://americanpeonysociety.org/news-events/if-wishes-were-peonies/>. Since we were short on time to get this together David, Linette and a number of others



put our heads together for an overall plan and then I took over with arrangements and website design and promotion. After looking at logistics and our experience with this type of convention it was decided that most of the options would be for members and not the public (too many privacy issues to deal with for public internet use). I believe there should have been more involvement by everyone in the planning and I realize this was not an optimum approach, but time was certainly an issue. My apologies for the unilateral approach, but am hoping it serves us well. The Virtual+ Convention basically includes the following:

- a. About...an overview and schedule. Attached you'll find a schedule events/activities.
 - b. Virtual Show...Online Photo Contest with classes. The website is set up for members to submit images through the Member Portal. Its actually pretty easy. Cate Crawford and Nick Maycher will oversee loading of images to the Virtual Show Page and manage the show. The Public will be able to view images. Further information may be found at: <https://americanpeonysociety.org/news-events/if-wishes-were-peonies/#virtual-show>.
 - c. Seminars +... We have 6 Zoom Seminars/meetings schedule, but can add more if someone would like to present. These are for members only and are scheduled through the website. I'm hopeful that some of you are able to participate in the Zoom seminars. Our first meeting is with Don Smith on May 2. More information can be found: <https://americanpeonysociety.org/news-events/if-wishes-were-peonies/#seminars>.
 - d. Tours...This is broken into two parts – Publicly Available and Member Only Tours. Some of our commercial members have publicly available tours of their operations and links are provided to their own URL's. If they have a flyer, there are no prices or sales promotions listed to stay in line with our non-profit requirements. Some members in the Minnesota-Wisconsin area prepared their gardens for the Minnesota convention and to give them an opportunity to show them we made these Member Only Tours. Members wishing to tour their gardens must sign up through the website.
 - e. Sponsorship...A sponsorship page is available and a number of members have taken advantage of this. Donor names are listed on a "Paeonia Hall of Fame" wall on the page.
 - f. Video...Members may upload videos to the website. This is still in the works, but Jordan Kabat is able to do video editing for us.
 - g. Meetings...Annual General Membership Meeting signup through the Member Portal. This is much the same as last year's signup, but we'll do it through Zoom this year. Signup is disabled until a date is decided by the BOD.
- 6) **Award of Landscape Merit.** This program has been dormant for a number of years and for a number of reasons from my point of view. A number of members have reached out and are wondering about its status and are interested. A judges training was held in 2019 in Iowa during the convention and was well attended, but few judging scorecards were turned in. One of the biggest complaints/barriers I hear from judges is the complexity and vagueness of the scorecard. Scoring is difficult and time consuming. Judges indicate their time is very short during a short peony bloom season to make use of the score card as well. Simplification and clarity seem to be the biggest issues. Additionally, from my perspective, greater contact with judges may be necessary to procure scoring (reminders). As Adriana, who chairs this committee, has been unable to do oversight at this time, I'm wondering if a small group would like to get together to look at some possibilities to put ALM back into play?
- 7) **Auctions.** I've not included a spring Auction this year due to hearing from a number of growers they would prefer the fall option, but we can add it if Mary and others believe we should do so. The fall auction, after communication with Cory and Leena may give APS the opportunity to provide EU Members with participation through donors from EU countries. Leena and Cory can discuss with Mary and the Auction Committee.
- 8) **Thanking our MEMBER workforce.** A number of members are heavily involved in society activities and provide a large service to our membership. If you are able to send an individual thank you note or email to any or all of them they would certainly appreciate it, knowing the BOD recognizes their efforts. The danger of thanking

people, is missing someone. I know of many others who have made contributions, but wanted to outline some of those that come to mind immediately.

- a. Sharon Schmitz...**Commercial Advertising Manager**. Sharon has made huge progress managing CM ads, payments, answering questions, providing forms and other forms of assistance over the past year. Commercial membership and satisfaction has grown under her oversight.
- b. Craig Aiken, Steve Smith, Brandie Orchard, Liz Best, Lynn Gessling...These folks comprise our **Social Media Team**. They work on a daily basis to oversee our Facebook Home Page, Facebook Group and Instagram, Pinterest platforms. Much of our membership and other peony interested peony folks from around the world use these platforms regularly for information and social enjoyment. Many pieces questions are answered and society information is disseminated and they help to fulfill our mission of education and forward the peony. FB Group = 3.9k members; Pinterest = 17.6 monthly views; FB page = 6,063 followers; Instagram = 1,398 followers.
- c. Hazel Cook...**Corresponding Secretary**. Hazel has been very busy with correspondence this year and her efforts are very much appreciated. Questions are answered quickly or disseminated to members who may more easily answer. She serves as one of our “frontline” workers and is always courteous, no matter the issue.
- d. Kim Bremer...**Editor**. Kim is responsible for a myriad of duties involving the publication of the Bulletin including: editing, writing, image and article procurement, fact checking, publisher communication, scheduling, layout oversight and coordination of all aspects of the Bulletin. She works long hours putting together the Bulletin and working with members to provide wide ranging articles for the publication. Membership has provided many positive comments about the direction of the Bulletin as well. She works hard to make sure Bulletins go out on time and are balanced in content.
- e. Reiner Jakubowski...**Nomenclature, History and Registrar**. Reiner quietly serves many duties within the society which are important to our members. In recent years he has expertly dealt with a growing number of new peony registrations and is instrumental in the detail of content in new registrations. Hybridizers and peony information seekers have been impressed with the available information for peonies which were registered under his oversight of IRCA for APS. The New Cultivar Directory and Website’s Peony Registry are popular and used heavily. Reiner also provides historical information for any questions APS members may have – much appreciated.
- f. Cate Crawford, Lois Girton, Jill Stevens, Nick Maycher, Jeri O’Connor...**Editorial Board**. Kim works with numerous people to put together APS’ Bulletin. These people make her work easier and also provide much needed input, perspectives, technical assistance, content, proofing and outreach. Please note Jeri O’Connor is tasked with reaching out to local or regional societies for updates and has done this expertly.
- g. Kent Tretheway...Mentorship Program. Kent works to connects mentees with mentors. Not an easy job due to the number of available mentors. He could use some help procuring more mentors in the area of hybridizing. Participants have expressed their satisfaction with the program and the program fulfills APS’ mission of education.
- h. Kris Jurik...**Treasurer**. Kris works daily keeping APS’ books in good working order. She monitors the website for new orders and memberships; provides documentation, welcome notes and numerous other services with each financial interaction. She produces reports and updates for the BOD and membership and provides oversight of everything financial. She interfaces with all and any entity within the Society that requires financial assistance (many). Additionally she travels to see APS’ accountant for an annual audit each year. With the increase in membership and other activities this year, Kris has been extremely busy.
- i. Linette Sorrentino...**Membership**. Linette has had an extremely busy year with a growing number of individual and commercial memberships. She keeps meticulous membership records and works with

the treasurer, editor and any other entity which requires membership information. New members are always welcomed through email letters. Additionally, she mails numerous Bulletins throughout the year to members who have signed up for membership out of the main cycle.

- j. David Michener, David & Linette Sorrentino, Craig Aiken, Kris Jurik & Kim Bremer. These folks are currently providing leadership/work on **APS conventions**. A growing interest in APS conventions make their work important for the society's mission and planning for opportunities is no easy task (I'm sure they can tell you). I'd invite any interested Directors to jump in and help where you can; the volume of planning and connections is daunting and these folks have already done much of the ground work.
- k. Jim Sampson...**Science writing for the Bulletin**. Jim has done a wonderful job of writing scientific pieces for the Bulletin over the past year. He has provided much assistance to the editor in this endeavor and deserves recognition for crafting understandable and important emerging information for our members.
- l. Leena Liljestrang and Cory Tischman... **International Outreach**. These folks have quietly begun to include more international content into our society's activities. Through Bulletin articles, social media and correspondence APS is seeing greater involvement by our international members and we are seeing growth in international membership.
- m. Mary Muellner...**Auctions**. Mary works with a number of other Members and Directors to fund raise and bring peonies to our membership. Procuring donations, setting up the auction, running the auction and communicating with members and donors are all part of getting this job done – lots of moving parts to say the least. Auctions are popular with our membership and her work is seen as a “frontline” activity due to its public promotion through social media.
- n. Mike Miller...**Publications**. As the website has been more heavily travelled Mike's work has increased, much of it international mailing. Mike houses, oversees and manages all of APS' publications. He monitors the website for orders and expertly gets orders out through the mail.
- o. Scott Parker...**Seed Distribution Program**. This year has been very busy for Scott with the availability of online ordering through the website (56 orders at this point). Scott produces lists, manages inventory, packages seeds, coordinates orders, mails orders and communicates with those who order seeds. The program has become extremely popular and membership is excited each year to add some new peonies to their garden through growing seeds.
- p. Steve Smith, Craig Aiken, Brandie Orchard...**Awards Programs**. These folks have revamped the Awards programs and have done great work getting the word out, but also managing the incoming nomination information. Medals are now part of personal awards. They meet to vet award nominations and prepare needed information for the awards. I'm looking forward to this more organized/criteria based awards approach.
- q. Lois Girton...**Zoom Meetings**. Lois has been of great assistance working out the use of online conferencing (Zoom). She will Cohost many of the upcoming seminars and meetings APS puts and this should help them to run more smoothly, creating a more enjoyable experience for those involved. I might add that Lois also assists Kim heavily in with Bulletin proofing, direction and insight (especially science related).

Nate Bremer
APS President