

TREE PEONY

Tree peonies are the most glamorous of all plants for the garden. Not really trees at all, they are a deciduous shrub with woody stems. The site chosen for a tree peony is very important since it must be sheltered from icy winds and grows best with morning sun only.

Prepare the soil to 18" with generous amounts of sphagnum peat moss and about 1/2 lb. bone meal or superphosphate dug in. A full grown tree peony can spread to five feet so give it a good wide planting site.

Plant very deep - the graft union should be covered with 6" of soil. This is deeper than it is planted in the pot. The roots are brittle so handle carefully. Cover roots and water well. Plants should not be allowed to dry out, but insure excellent drainage at all times. Cover woody stems for the winter with evergreen branches or other light porous mulch. Cut back to live wood in spring only when buds begin to swell. Never cut off woody stems.

Tree peonies, which bloom in late May or early June, should be given a good feed each year in May. Use a high phosphorus fertilizer. Be sure to remove spent flowers promptly.

Flowers won't develop to the fullest their first year, but once the plant is established, it will produce dozens of gorgeous silken flowers each year.