



# PRESS KIT

## P E O N Y ' S   E N V Y

Thank you for your interest in Peony's Envy. Enclosed please find an overview of Peony's Envy, an introduction to peonies, information on the shows we attend, examples of articles on Peony's Envy, details on our lectures and presentations, and a glimpse of our garden events.



# PEONY'S ENVY

## ABOUT PEONY'S ENVY

Peony's Envy is a nursery and display garden in Bernardsville, New Jersey within easy access of New York City and Philadelphia. Peony's Envy offers one of the most extensive collections of tree, herbaceous and intersectional peonies in the country.

Peony's Envy ships peonies nationwide from September through May; attends flower shows and horticultural events nationwide throughout the year; and opens its nursery and display garden to the public in New Jersey for the spring planting and bloom season and again in the fall for bare root sales.

See our online catalog for the most recent peony selection and our online events page for the current listing of shows and events that we travel to across the country.



## THE DISPLAY GARDEN

The gardens are laid out over an 8-acre property with trails that meander throughout the peony collections. Four major types of peonies are highlighted in the garden: woodland, tree, herbaceous, and intersectional. Over 500 different cultivars planted in the garden, each of which will bloom for a period of 7-10 days over a six week bloom period. The bloom sequence opens with the woodland and tree peonies and is followed by the herbaceous and intersectional bloom. The largest array of color comes during the herbaceous peony bloom, which weather dependent, often corresponds with Memorial Day. Cool weather will prolong the bloom, hot weather and heavy rain will shorten the bloom.





# PEONY'S ENVY

## TYPES OF PEONIES

Thoughts of sunny springtime blossoms, wafting fragrances and luscious bouquets bring peonies to the top of every gardener's priority list. Peonies are outstanding perennial plants that with a little care during planting will bloom relatively maintenance free for generations to come. There are four main groups of peonies. We list them here in order of bloom: woodland, tree, herbaceous, and intersectional.

Woodland peonies are an herbaceous perennial that will leaf out and bloom very early in the spring prior to the leaves emerging on the deciduous forest trees. They provide a lovely dainty early spring white blossom, beautiful summer foliage, and a vibrant fall seed pod. We highly recommend the cultivar *Paeonia japonica*. Plant informally in the deciduous woodland or in your formal garden near your hellebores and hostas. Roots should be planted just below the surface in the soft humus portion of the soil. Deer will not eat this plant.

The next to bloom are the tree peonies - they are not a tree at all but a woody shrub. Tree Peonies are ideal for those who crave

"traffic stopping blossoms" and whose gardens have dappled or full sunlight. The tree peony produces gigantic dinner-plate sized flowers on plants that grow from 3-7 feet tall. After the bloom, they provide structure to the garden with deep green leaves in summer and bronze foliage in the fall. The keys to success with Tree Peonies are to: 1) allocate enough space - a good 3 to 5 feet - while tree peonies take time to grow, they will not want to be



# PEONY'S ENVY

moved once established 2) consider sunlight and wind - the blossoms will last longer with morning sun and afternoon shade or dappled sunlight all day, in an area with low wind 3) plant deeply.

Herbaceous Peonies are the most well known type of peony. They are disease resistant perennial plants that enhance the structure and beauty of any garden and produce some of the best cut



flowers available. When planting herbaceous peonies remember:

- 1) the more sun they get the more flowers they will have
- 2) plant with good drainage in nutritive soil to avoid "wet feet"
- 3) planting depth should be only .5"-1.5" below the soil surface - dig a deep hole but set the crown of the root just below the surface of the soil
- 4) do not cover crowns with mulch because peonies need the cold to flower. Following these guidelines will result in a wealth of blossoms to share with friends and family for generations to come.

Itoh or Intersectional peonies are cross between a tree and an herbaceous peony, offering the best of both worlds. These plants extend the season by blooming at the end of the traditional peony bloom season, have blossoms that continue to open in waves for weeks, and offer colors not often found in herbaceous peonies. This peony variety is quickly gaining in popularity.

To find out more about peonies visit [peonysenvy.com](http://peonysenvy.com).





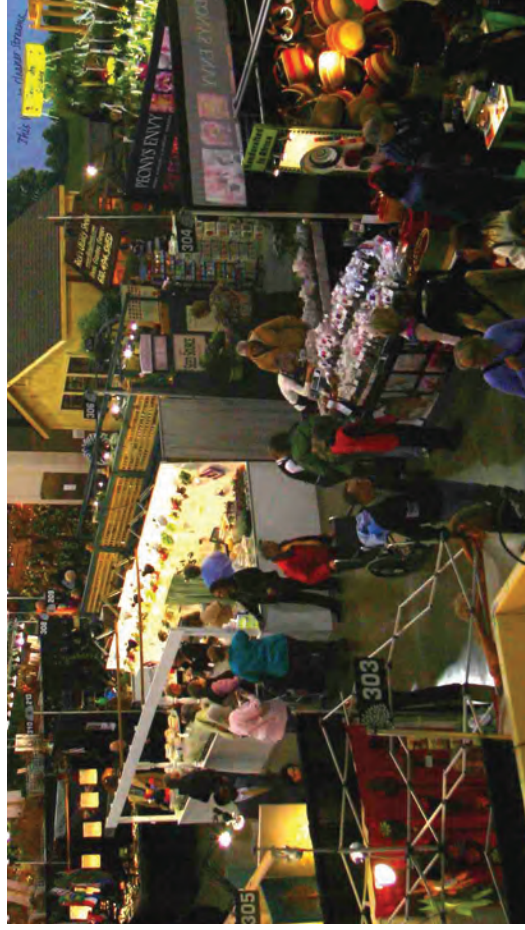
# PEONY'S ENVY

## PEONY'S ENVY SHOWS

Peony's Envy attends 30 to 50 flower shows, horticultural events, and specialty shows across North America each year. For more information on our current show schedule visit our website, [peonysenvy.com](http://peonysenvy.com), and view our Calendar of Events. The following pages will give you an idea of the look of our booth setup for indoor and outdoor shows.



# INDOOR SHOWS



## A FEW OF OUR INDOOR SHOWS

- Philadelphia Flower Show
- Northeast Flower Show
- Canada Blooms
- Nashville Antique & Garden Show
- Chicago Antiques & Garden Fair



# OUTDOOR SHOWS



## A FEW OF OUR OUTDOOR SHOWS

- Trade Secrets
- Newport Flower Show
- FOSA Arborfest
- National Cathedral Flower Mart







# PEONY'S ENVY

## P E O N Y ' S E N V Y I N T H E P R E S S

Peony's Envy has been featured in local and national publications on gardening and lifestyle. Included in this packet are a few of the print articles on Peony's Envy. Kathleen Gagan, owner and founder of Peony's Envy, has also been featured on the Martha Stewart Show and is a certified speaker for the Garden Club of America.



# PEONY'S ENVY

## MARTHA STEWART LIVING

MAKING a HOUSE a HOME

# GOOD LIVING

This month, we discover peonies to swoon over, get inspiration from a passionate collector, and boldly walk over a planted garden pathway.



**EASY BREEZY**  
Create a pretty summery scene by placing brightly hued long-stemmed blooms in decorative bottles and floating single blossoms in small bowls, as seen here in Kathleen Gagan's flower-filled garden in New Jersey.

**Kenington Whiteware dishes, by Martha Stewart Collection, from \$10 each, marthastewart.com; decorative glass bottles, \$9 each, containerstore.com; Amanda tablecloth, in Orange, \$110, roborcaonline.com. (All similar to above.)**

PHOTOGRAPH BY Juliana Sohn

MARTHA STEWART.COM | 73

### GARDENING

## BURGEONING SUCCESS

One peony farmer proves that persistence is essential to sowing the seeds of a business with staying power.



**IN THE LATE 1990s,** Kathleen Gagan traded her job as an international communications consultant stationed in Asia for life as a farmer in Bernardsville, New Jersey. With school-age children, she wanted work that would keep her close to home and provide a flexible schedule. Gagan didn't know it at the time, but purchasing property with a farmland assessment—a state initiative requiring owners to dedicate land to agriculture—was her first step toward cultivating one of the largest peony collections in the Northeast. During the next eight years, her attempts to grow peonies and irises failed, thanks to a local deer population with a big appetite, but the third and final attempt—peonies—was a winner. “They are an old-fashioned plant for a modern



### peony painters

Kathleen Gagan grows what she's learned. Once established in full, bright sun, peonies thrive for more than 100 years.

**WAYS TO ENJOY IT:** Beyond their iconic, in-fall, when the plants are dormant, you can expand your collection and share with friends.

**BLOOMS THAT LAST:** If you cut herbaceous peonies while they are still bud form, they'll last for up to six weeks in the refrigerator. Take them out of the refrigerator and they will open at room temperature.

**COSE FLETCHER:** Peonies are ready in June and July. To require winter's chill to bloom, so it's better not to give them extra protection in winter. Plants shallow, and avoid much.

### FLOWER FIELDS

Above left: Kathleen Gagan opens her five-acre peony garden to the public from late April to early July. Below: Gagan's gift tags—receipts for peonies and gift tags.



The success of her business can be attributed to her expertly curated selection of cultivars, including herbaceous and tree peonies, yellow, and striped varieties. “I try to push the boundaries to find the newest thing,” she says. In an effort to expand the business, she recently launched a product line of peony-themed accessories. For Gagan, growth opportunities abound.

WRITTEN BY Melissa Ozawa | PHOTOGRAPHS BY Juliana Sohn



# PEONY'S ENVY

## GARDEN DESIGN



**GROW**

'Bowl of Beauty'

'Xi's Face Powder'

'Golden Phoenix Feather'

'Smart Girl'

'Coral Sunset'

'Purple Phoenix Feather'

'Charm'

'Coral Sunset'

'White Crane'

'Raspberry Sundae'

'Buddha's Lotus Seal'

'Betty Warner'

'Golden Jade'

### The Big Easy

Peonies deliver showstopping blooms with surprisingly little effort

by LISA FINDERBURG • photography by NGOC MINH NGO

BEFORE KATHLEEN GAGAN started Peony's Envy, the New Jersey nursery that grew the exquisite herbaceous specimens pictured here, she spent a decade living in China, the epicenter of peony cultivation for the last 1,000 years. There, Gagan saw more variations of the resilient and long-lived perennial than she could have imagined when she first came to love the fragrant blooms of her grandmother's Milwaukee garden. As inspiring as that Asian panorama may have been, what really got Gagan into the business, she concedes, was a series of catastrophes. "I wanted to grow peaches and cherries," she says, "but that failed because we have deer. Then I tried irises, but we have iris borers." Her experiments took place on a seven-acre agriculturally zoned property she and her husband bought upon their return to the United States in the mid-1990s. Gagan was determined to grow something on it so she





# PEONY'S ENVY

NEW JERSEY LIFE



## Peony's Pride

A globe-trotting linguist sets down roots in Bernardsville and launches her *dream career* in flower farming.

TEXT BY ANNE MARIE CLOUTIER PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW BENSON

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Chun Xiao  
Spring Laughter

Kathleen Gagan (left) says Chun Xiao (Spring Laughter) is one foot tall and needs little making — great for placing in front of a flower bed.



# PEONY'S ENVY

## NEW JERSEY LIFE



*Xiang Jing Gui Xue*  
(Exotic Sunflower)



*Lian Sui*  
(Rudolf's Salmon Seal)



*Fen Yu Tu*  
(Pink as a Young Girl)



If you're looking for growing peonies, Dr. H. Gail Gagan (Great Peonies) is a wonderful starting point. The number of plants you are likely to find, however, is limited.

**“Peonies are easy! They're disease-resistant, so they don't need pesticides. And once established, they don't need a lot of water.” —Kathleen Gagan**

grandma in her garden when I was first, so for years I failed,” she says. “I like to take things on first, then learn an 1-gal.” She started by raising iris — and killed them all. The following year she tried fruit trees — which the deer grazed on like a salad bar. Then, recalling her time in China, she considered the peony, which is China's unofficial national flower. She researched a few Chinese varieties of bulk stock to supplement local peony sources. “One thing led to another, and along the way I not only learned about peonies but also about import permits, federal regulations, local ordinances, and a hundred other things I'd never thought about,” she says. “Yet my life experience and business skills helped me pull it all together.”

In 2002, she planted her first peony crop, which was the humble beginnings of her nursery and display garden merrily named Peony's Envy. Today Gagan confidently contends, “Peonies are easy! They're disease-resistant, so they don't need pesticides. And once established, they don't need a lot of water. Also, the roots are a cinch to divide — which means the plants can just keep on going.” Another bonus about raising peonies: The deer tend to snub them.

During the next five years, Peony's Envy grew to become one of the most extensive collections of tree and herbaceous peony plants in the Northeast. Gagan started selling peonies commercially in 2004. “By 2006, I was ready to open up the gardens to the public and incorporate the business,” she says. In the garden's rising display — more than 200 cultivars of tree and herbaceous peonies from all over the world, amounting to 30,000 plants total — colors include white, yellow, coral, pink, red, and “black” (actually a deep red).

Another draw for fans of the genus *Paeonia* is its astonishing variety. A peony hybrid might assume the shape of a daisy, a rose, a lotus blossom, an anemone, a chrysanthemum, a crown, or even a large, lavishly petalled globe called a “bomba.”

“From the very beginning, I wanted to farm something that was beautiful, that didn't heavily impact the environment, and that the public could share,” she says. “And the peony farm has grown into that.”

Visit [www.peonysenvy.com](http://www.peonysenvy.com) for Kathleen Gagan's life as a growing peonier. For more on Peony's Envy and the care of tree and herbaceous peonies, visit [peonys.com](http://peonys.com).

**Languages might have come easily for Kathleen Gagan,** a corporate communications expert trained in Spanish and Chinese, but when it came to speaking the language of flora, the learning curve was a bit steeper. The linguist had lived an exotic life — she was married to an international business executive, and she taught English at companies in Venezuela and Asia — but her dream was to open a nursery.

In 1996 Gagan and her husband moved their family from China to Bernardsville. “The house we bought was a serious fire-supper, but the property was perfect,” Gagan says. “We've got 7.4 acres, including woodland that backs onto a tract of green space preserved and owned by the town. The property we bought was in farmland assessment, so creating a working farm became my job. When the kids were in school, I was a farmer.”

Gagan did not have a green thumb, so her desire to launch a nursery business might have seemed surprising. “My experience in farming was limited to watching my



*Dan Feng*  
(Red Phoenix)



*Yan Shi Quan Yu*  
(Range Sprinkled Jade)



*Si Feng Yu*  
(Purple Phoenix Feather)



# LECTURES & WORKSHOPS

Kathleen Gagan, owner and founder of Peony's Envy, gives lectures and workshops on peonies: care, planting, cultivation, propagation and garden design across the country. She has presented at the Scott Arboretum Hardy Plant Conference, Longwood Gardens, the Hortus Club of New York, the Martha Stewart Living Show, as well as national flower shows and garden clubs. Kathleen is currently on the GCA National Speaker List.

## LECTURE TOPICS

### 1. INTRODUCTION TO PEONIES

A vibrant pictorial introduction to the different types of peonies, available colors, flower shapes, and growth habits. Includes a brief introduction to selecting peonies, peony garden design, planting and care.

### 2. DESIGNING GARDENS WITH PEONIES

An in-depth pictorial lecture on how to design gardens with peonies. Perfect for the advanced gardener or paired up with the Introductory Lecture. Includes an in-depth look at cultivar selection, siting, and designing gardens with peonies.

### 3. PEONY PLANTING, CARE & PROPAGATION

An in-depth pictorial lecture on how to properly plant, care for, and propagate peonies. Perfect for the advanced gardener or paired up with the Introductory or Garden Design Lecture. Includes information on planting locations, planting methods, spring & fall care, recognizing & treating diseases, dividing herbaceous peony roots, grafting tree peony scions and growing peonies from seed.



## WORKSHOPS

Hands on Peony Propagation Workshops. Bring your gloves and your aprons for these hands-on workshops.

### 1. HERBACEOUS PEONY PROPAGATION

Learn how to divide herbaceous peony roots and grow herbaceous peonies from seed.

### 2. TREE PEONY PROPAGATION

Learn how to divide tree peony roots and graft tree peony scions, and how to grow tree peonies from seed.

## BIO

Kathleen is a linguist and international corporate communications consultant turned lady farmer. After a successful life overseas, where she became fluent in Mandarin Chinese and Spanish, Kathleen returned home to New Jersey to a life as an entrepreneur. She grows peonies because of their resilience, deer-resistance, and beauty.



To book a lecture or workshop please contact Kathleen at [peony@peonysenvy.com](mailto:peony@peonysenvy.com) or 908.578.3032





# GARDEN EVENTS

## EVENTS AT THE GARDEN

Peony's Envy hosts a limited number of private events in the heart of the garden each year. All events take place during the peony bloom from May 1 through June 15. Events can be partnered with outstanding local businesses to bring you the best of New Jersey amongst a sea of peonies. Partners are exclusive to the event and vary depending on the focus and theme.



## EVENT PLANNING

When planning your event it is important to consider what is likely to be in bloom at the time you wish to come. The peony bloom sequence is: woodland / species / tree / herbaceous / intersectional. Typically events are timed to correspond with the peak tree peony bloom at the very beginning of May or the peak herbaceous peony bloom during late May and Early June. Due to variations in weather we can not guarantee what will be in bloom, but we are more than happy to help walk you through the general bloom sequence.

Please email [peony@peonysenvy.com](mailto:peony@peonysenvy.com) if you are interested in having an exclusive event at Peony's Envy.





