

Dividing Peonies

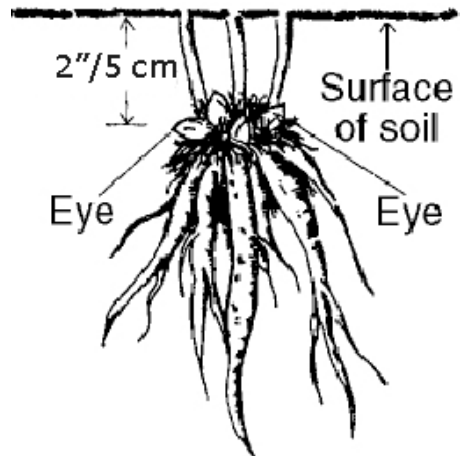
Peonies can be left undisturbed in the garden for 50 or more years. However, large peonies can be divided in the fall if additional plants are desired. Never divide a plant that is less than three years old because it retards flowering for several years.

An elongated spade is your best friend for this project. To lift the whole plant, start by digging about 8-10 inches out from the stems and circle the plant. Cut straight down the first time around the plant to make a 3-4 inch trench. Then, turn the spade inward on the second cut around. The idea is to undercut all roots at 6 inches or more length. Try to avoid prying with the spade as good roots will be lost from breaking away at their tops. Instead, go around again and again until the root ball is cut loose and can be rolled out of the hole.

Split the clump into halves or thirds making sure you have a minimum of three to five eyes with a taproot attached to each tuber. This contains the stored food supply. The more buds that are collected, the better the blooming result will be next spring. Dust division cuts with fungicide to keep free of disease organisms.



Plant divisions at least three feet apart and position so the buds are only 1 to 2 inches below the soil. Note that plants may not bloom well if the buds are more than 2 inches deep. Poorly drained soils can often be improved by working in large amounts of compost, sphagnum peat moss or leaf mold.



Peonies need at least 6 hours of full sun each day. If your plants receive less and are not thriving, consider moving them to a brighter spot.

Do not cut peony foliage until it is damaged by frost. Once the soil freezes, rake leaves over the crown, then remove the mulch in the spring.

Peony history goes back to cultivation in China over 2,500 years ago. Continued breeding of this perennial has produced hundreds of cultivars.

The genus is *Paeonia* and is pronounced pea-o'-ni-ay. Pea-o-'nees or pea-'o-nees?

Either way, they are hardy, durable plants with beautiful spring flowers and glossy dark green foliage that stays attractive until fall. Let them multiply with your help!

[To divide an Iris or Daylily follow this link.](#)