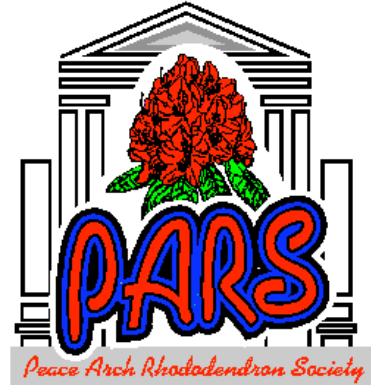


# PARS News

## Coming Events

<u>Jan 22</u>	<b>General Meeting</b> ( <a href="#">Google Earth map</a> )
7:30 pm	Speaker: Nancy Moore – Fraser Valley College Topic: Small Gardens
Feb 26	<b>General Meeting</b> ( <a href="#">Google Earth map</a> )
7:30 pm	Speaker: Garth Wedemire Topic: About the Species Studies Workshops
Mar 25	<b>Annual General Meeting</b> ( <a href="#">Google Earth map</a> )
7:30 pm	AGM Material - Elections Speaker: TBA Topic: TBA



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### President's Message – Ken Parker

A great "Thank You" goes to all of the participants in the Christmas Party and in particular to our own club member and presenter Cindy. The wreath and swag making was most entertaining and a lot of fun. I think that quite a few members went home and practiced their newfound skill by making up some presentation pieces and giving them to their friends.

The silent auction was well supported by both, members donating and bidding. It almost goes without saying that the food was plentiful and tasty. So as the old saying goes "you did yourselves proud".

I hope that each and every one of you had a Happy Christmas and a New Years to remember. We have passed the shortest day of the year and each fresh day brings us a little more sunshine. I see that there are still a few flowers to be found in the garden along with holly and other evergreen plants, lets just hope that we don't get much more "cold" weather.

It seems to me that the modern house lot is diminishing in size and the space available on decks and balconies is limited. In keeping with the thought that many modern gardeners are dealing with smaller lots and limited space we have organized a presenter to talk about how to address these challenges.



***The Gardener's Guide to Growing Peonies*** by Martin Page

160 pages, approx. 76 plates colour photos, Appendices include *Glossary, Bibliography, Synonyms of Peony Species, Where to Buy Peonies*. Index . Published in North America in 1997 by Timber Press Inc., Portland, Oregon. Copyright Martin Page 1997. ISBN 0 7153 0531 X (hardcover)

**Martin Page** studied botany at Swansea University and went on to receive a PhD from the University of Exeter. He has continued his botanical research developing a specialization in peonies over the last few years. He is establishing a collection of species peonies and has started to breed his own varieties. A professional photographer for many years, he developed a specialization in horticultural and landscape photography. Martin is a member of the American Peony Society and his other main plant interests are palms, citrus species and herbaceous perennials.

***The Gardener's Guide to Growing Peonies*** is a comprehensive and wide-ranging study of a large genus with a complex classification, and the first major review of the peony since 1946. Specialists will derive much valuable botanical information while practical gardeners will find ideas for using peonies in rockeries, herbaceous borders and woodland gardens as well as for autumn colour and as feature plants. The book includes detailed descriptions of over 600 species and cultivars, features a wealth of practical advice on cultivation, pest and disease control, garden uses and contains research into the plant's history, distribution and developments in hybridizing.

The author points out that the peony is an immensely rewarding plant for gardeners giving a profusion of magnificent flowers on thornless stems throughout a long season and with little care. Many peonies have the additional bonus of being scented and, with over 4,000 varieties of herbaceous peony available, there is sure to be a colour to suit every situation. They are drought-resistant and largely unaffected by pests and diseases.

The book is divided into nine chapters, plus an Introduction and the Appendices following at the end with the Index. Following the common pattern of so many gardening books, Chapter One leads the reader into History and Botany with such interesting details as the likely derivation of the name "peony" which the author explains is "peony" and not "pæony", which is a recent corruption of the Latin name. It is thought to have been named after the Greek mythological figure, Pæon, a pupil of Asclepius, the Greek God of medicine and healing. He reputedly discovered peonies growing on the slopes of Mount Olympus – after Leto (Apollo's mother) told him where to find them – and used them to cure a wound that Pluto had received in a fight with Hercules. Asclepius was so jealous of Pæon's success that he had him killed. However, the grateful Pluto then had him changed into the flower that cured him. The author dryly comments that this seems little compensation for his fate!

In medieval times, peonies were highly valued as medicinal plants to relieve "pains of the belly", "jaundice", "complaints of the kidneys and bladder", "to prevent nightmares", "falling sickness", "convulsions" to name a few. Dried peonies were also hung outside of houses, as were peony bushes planted, to ward off evil spirits, and petals of dried peonies and root bark are still used extensively in traditional Chinese medicine.

***The Gardener's Guide to Growing Peonies*** offers the reader a wide range of subjects, covering in the various chapters peony species, hybrids, tree peonies and the best way to use them in your garden. Enjoy this book.

## Musings from my Garden – Joan Bengough

### Random Thoughts on a Rainy Day

I find looking back easier than making New Year's Resolutions. By the time you've gone browsing through your favourite gardening books and magazines and seed catalogues, the urge to do better, or more, next year, has gone. Thank goodness! I have been looking through an old *Gardener's Journal* that I started keeping in 1994, mainly because I was curious to know if the weather was changing much, but my attention was caught by a reference to picking Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis mollis*) to take when visiting a relative on January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1994. The following year I noted that it was a week later coming into bloom, January 9<sup>th</sup>, though I also noted that *Hamamelis Jelena* was in full bloom before Christmas. However, the next reference was in 1997, when *H. mollis* was "just starting to bloom at the top of the bush" on January 19<sup>th</sup> - a very late year. What I did find interesting was that snowdrops were starting to bloom on the same date, January 31<sup>st</sup> in 1994 and 1997, presumably responding to different signals than those of the Witch Hazel. Unfortunately, I did not keep a constant diary, so can't comment on the performance over the next few years and I no longer own those plants - they were left behind when I moved.

Since moving into my present house I have not consistently kept records - last year I made no entries at all - but I have started off this year by making note of temperature and weather and do plan to keep more of a record of what is in bloom and how it is doing. Is that beginning to sound like a New Year's Resolution? Heaven forbid!

I need the information because my present garden is a totally different kettle of fish from my previous one. After gardening for nearly 40 years on a sandy slope, a level clay base takes a bit of getting used to. Before, as soon as it stopped raining it was possible to work in the garden. Now I need a couple of dry days before I can get out there, and even then it is questionable whether I should step on the beds - although that is something I try to avoid at any time anyway.

Today it has stopped raining and there are even small patches of blue visible occasionally; the moats that form between the grass and the raised beds are starting to dry out. And, for the second day in a row, I have had a flock of birds - mostly Chickadees and Juncos - rummaging in the garden for tasty morsels. Can Spring be far behind?



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