Record Number of Peony Roots Planted in 2013

Peony roots flew into the state this year in record numbers. What sort of numbers are we talking about? Ron Illingworth (North Pole Peonies) received over 37,000 last spring. Mike Williams (Alaska Peony Distributors) reports distributing over 12,000 roots in the Mat-Su area. LaDawn Druce (Alaska Summer Peonies) reports distributing 8,600 roots in the Soldotna-Kenai area, and in Homer Rita Jo (Alaska Perfect Peony) distributed 17,640 and Shelley Rainwater (Alaska Beauty Peony Cooperative) distributed around 5,000. That’s a total of 80,240 roots. Wow. And that doesn’t include roots that were shipped directly to individual growers!

Where did all these roots come from? About half, 40,000+ came from Oregon Perennials, some were imported from Holland, and the rest from miscellaneous U.S. suppliers. APGA maintains a listing of root suppliers used by our members on the members-only area at our web site (alaskapeonies.org).

When asked if she was worried about selling all the flowers these roots will make, Rita Jo responded: “I worry more about not enough [flowers] than too many.”

One thing a lot of us don’t think about is how much work is required to handle these large orders. Many kudos go to the Alaska root distribution centers. We all know that consolidat-
Incoming Roots (CONT'D)

Ed shipments definitely provide savings in shipping, but they also result in a lot of extra work for growers who volunteer to distribute these extra large shipments. All those crates need to be sorted, inventoried, checked off, and distributed, as well as problems need to be resolved when orders are not completely filled or growers accidentally get another grower’s roots. Root suppliers don’t really know how many roots they will have each fall before they are dug, so growers have sometimes been disappointed in the past when they didn’t receive all the roots they thought they had ordered. Ko Klaver (OPC) reports that this year, “Overall, the season went very well” although a limited amount of pro-rating was still required on certain varieties.

But what used to be a rather difficult process every fall (or spring in the Interior) to get peony roots up to Alaska and distributed efficiently to the growers, is gradually smoothing out year by year as everyone, from the suppliers to the distributors to the growers, work to streamline the process. For the first time, both Alaska Peony Market in Soldotna and Alaska Peony Distributors in the Mat-Su provided cooling facilities for storing the roots until growers were ready to plant. Mike Williams wrote that this was “the first time Mat-Su peony farmers have had the luxury of holding their roots in a commercial cooler after they arrived in Alaska. This gives peony growers some much needed flexibility prior to receiving and planting their roots.”

Alaska peony growers continue to believe that small family-owned farms can create a significant industry for Alaska. All these roots are a bellwether of the flower sales to come! 1,000,000 peony stems per year... here we come!!
1st Annual Peony Photo Contest

APGA is holding its first annual photo contest to produce a 2014 calendar featuring photos of Alaska peonies. The calendars are scheduled to be ready by the first of December... just in time for Christmas gifts.

Photographs of Alaska peonies can be submitted electronically to apga.photo.contest@gmail.com until October 15. Twelve photographs will be selected for the calendar, and the winning entry will be featured on the calendar cover. Rules and entry forms are available at www.alaskapeonies.org.

Coming Up: 2013 APGA’s Growers Cup Award

Remember this event from last winter’s conference? Its our own Dr. Holloway receiving the first annual APGA’s Growers Cup Award.

Well, its time to start thinking who she will pass it on to next year. Nominations for the award will be accepted from APGA growers during the month of November. Details for the nominating/voting process will be emailed out in October.

The purpose of the Alaska Cup Award is to recognize the outstanding volunteer/contributor to the Alaska peony industry for the current year. Nominees could be from the fields of research, government, floral industry, or any APGA member in good standing.

It’ll be hard for anyone to follow in Dr. Holloway’s shoes, but then again there are so many people who have done so much for our industry. This is our chance to show our appreciation. **
Updates from Alaska Division of Agriculture

Division of Ag Agricultural Inspector Mia Kirk made the rounds on the Peninsula in August to collect soil and leaf samples for nematodes, viruses, and anything else suspicious looking.

The Division of Agriculture wants to remind APGA members about the importance of joining the Alaska Grown program. The program requires a one-time application with no fee. Membership benefits include: access to grants, statewide marketing and outreach, and automatic recognition of your product for quality purposes. Find the Alaska Grown application at http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_AKGrown.htm.

If you use Facebook, be sure to connect with the Alaska Grown page. We have over 13,000 followers at this time, and we enjoy reposting your beautiful peony photos!

Finally, are you aware of the Division’s monthly e-mail newsletter? You can find back copies at http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_newsletters.htm or email Amy Pettit to sign up to receive it directly in your inbox.

With funding from the Division of Agriculture, APGA hosted a July visit from Dr. Gary Chastagner, plant pathologist from Washington State University. His visit was part of a project to identify the species of botrytis gray mold on Alaska peony. He visited 25 farms across between the Interior and Homer, and besides collecting a bunch of samples, he handed out tons of information about disease, the importance of good sanitation practices, and advice for distinguishing between disease and the effects of other environmental factors such as over-watering, under-watering, herbicides overspray, etc. In this photo, Dr. Chastagner confers with Clay Sullivan at Midnight Sun Peonies Farm.
The Alaska Plant Materials Center (PMC), part of the Division of Agriculture, focuses on diagnosis and management of plant pathogens, as well as investigations into fungal endophytes in native and cultivated grasses. As the peony industry in Alaska has grown, so have concerns about disease management. Tobacco rattle virus (TRV) [effects shown in photo] was first confirmed in 2007 in peonies in Fairbanks.

This year, Todd Steinlage, an agronomist with PMC, analyzed samples from several peony growers that confirmed other peonies with TRV infections. The virus is transmitted by nematodes in the genera Trichodorus and Paratrichodorus that specifically vectored TRV, have not. However, nematodes in the same genus have been reported. Mia Kirk and Curtis Knight collected soil samples this year from participating growers in the Mat-Su, Interior, and Kenai Peninsula areas to continue monitoring for stubby-root nematodes.

In the future, if you would like your farm to participate in this monitoring survey, please contact Doug Warner at Douglas.Warner@alaska.gov or 907-761-3861. **

Field work on APGA's Fertility Study, supported by a Division of Agriculture grant, was put on hold until next year due to our unusual spring and winter weather. In the meantime, the research committee is working to compile the 2010 and 2012 data for the participating growers and hope to have that data distributed by the end of the year.

Soil and tissue samples will be collected next field season (2014) and final results will be compiled with the 2010 and 2012 data which will then be presented at the 2015 winter conference.

Signup forms and sampling kits will be available at the 2014 winter conference. Every APGA member with peonies that have been in the ground for at least two years is encouraged to participate in the study. **
Editors note. WEEDER GEESE are the “new thing” this year. At least four peony growers have used them to try to control our pesky Alaska weeds. Wayne Floyd (Cool Cache Peonies) will give a talk about his experience with weeder geese at the winter conference. Virginia Young (Springerhill Farm) submitted this fun article about her experience!

Here on Springerhill Farm weeds have always been a challenge for me. After a dose or two of glyphosate in the spring, some of my 40’ x 100’ peony plots are fairly weed free. These are farther away from my previous vegetable gardens. The plots in old vegetable gardens seem to have a hundred year seed bank supply so I decided to expand my working staff with weeder geese.

I purchased 10 goslings in the late spring and penned them out with portable fencing on the grass run ways in early summer. I moved their pen, made of a circle of sheep fencing pegged to the ground with four foot rebar, every two days. They did a good job of mowing this grass. I was afraid they may trample new peony shoots and so did not concentrate them in the beds. As the season moved on, I removed the pen and let them go in the peony plots. I was pleasantly surprised that they found the peonies unpalatable and that they thoroughly enjoyed the horse tail, shephards purse, grass, and lambs quarter. All I gave them was water daily and made available a portable Quonset-shaped shade shelter covered with blue tarp. They evenly spread their own manure around the peony plots which didn’t happen when they were penned up.

As of the 15th of Sept., I only had three of the ten geese I originally purchased. My neighbor’s dog got many of them and perhaps there was a predator such as fox or a lynx. The geese soon found my neighbor’s fenced cow paddock a safe place with no predators and have spent the last couple of weeks fouling their cow’s water much to the neighbor’s irritation, but what goes around comes around. As Fall approached, I arranged to have a local 4-H family take these remaining geese in exchange for a good-deal on more goslings early next summer.

I would like to continue this next summer, as I feel they made a significant impact on the weeds. They targeted weed seedlings which kept many of those weeds from going to seed. I will have to work on predator control, perhaps by putting older geese on the field and using a more aggressive breed. The geese I had this year were the smaller Chinese white geese. I don’t believe it would be worth trying to keep the geese over the winter. Renting geese or raising them up for the freezer are two options I am considering. **

We always stick together

Mmmm mmmm. Love that horsetail!
News from the Interior Peony Growers

Interior Peony Growers have been busy over the last few months. After our Spring meeting, the group formed a steering committee to begin the process of forming a cooperative and another group to set up the Interior’s Summer Tour.

Our group order of roots arrived in late May, just as the temperatures jumped from freezing to the 80’s! We received 13 pallets of peonies ordered by 27 farms from Nenana to Tok and North to Central. Additionally trial orders went to Copper Center and King Salmon. The trial shipment to Galena was cancelled when the Yukon River flooded the town.

Two planting clinics at root pick-up helped assure quality plantings.

Despite the busy summer, we put together a great summer tour. July 26th & 27th found 45 – 50 people touring Georgeson Botanical Gardens / UAF, two pack houses, and seven area farms. Ko Klaver, Bulb Trading Company/Oregon Perennials, Pat Holloway, UAF Georgesonian Gardens, Steve Seefeldt, UAF Cooperative Extension, and Jessica Guritz, Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District, gave presentations and accompanied us on all or parts of the tour to give insights on what they saw and answer questions.

The first day, Ko Klaver spoke to us at the Georgeson Gardens, then we visited Polar Peonies Pack House and farm. After lunch, we drove to Nenana and visited the Haken’s Fox Hollow Farm and Virginia Young’s Springer Hill Farm. These are both established farms.

Friday, it was back to Geogesons Gardens where Pat Holloway caught us up on peony research and what the Gardens had to offer peony growers.

With lunches in hand, we headed out Chena Hot Springs Road to visit Kim and John Heming’s Northern Lights Peonies and Jill and Dave Russell’s Boreal Peonies Farms. These are both new farms that planted their first roots this summer. At Boreal Peonies we got to see the fire crews that were set up in a field across the road. Then it was out to the North Pole/Salcha area to visit Ed and Annie Keep-Barns’ Cold Creek Farm where their first roots were planted this spring and they were clearing and prepping more fields for next year. The final stop was North Pole Peonies, one of the first peony farms in the Interior, to visit their farm and pack house and for a picnic. Fun and so much good information – made for a worthwhile experience!
So, now it is Fall – and the excitement is WE HAVE A CO-OP! The papers are filed and we have a board of directors – Wanda Haken, Carolyn Chapin, Kim Herning, Ron Illingworth, and yet to be identified representative from the Delta/Tok area.

We are busy getting ready for next season. We will have Growers Schools Oct 12th, New Growers 9-12 am, Intermediate Growers 1-4 pm. For information contact marji@northpolepeonies.com We are putting together group orders for irrigation supplies, fertilizers, pesticides, in addition to our group root shipments.

2014 Winter Conference
Jan 31/ Feb 1
BP Energy Center, Anchorage

Planning is underway for the Alaska Peony Growers 2014 Winter Conference. Believe it or not, this will be our 8th winter conference! As we get older, our conferences are getting better. And this year is no exception. We have a dynamite slate of speakers for you, we’re sure you won’t want to miss a single minute of the conference. There will be limited seating this year, so be sure to register early. Here’s a sneak preview of our featured speakers:

We’re excited to announce that Alaska’s own Jeff Lowenfels, author of Teaming with Microbes and garden editor for the Alaska Daily News, will join us. He will give us the latest on keeping soil healthy and using compost tea on commercial peony farms.

You may not recognize the name, but Richard Currie is the owner of Styers Peonies (styerspeonies.com/) which includes 7 cut-flower peony farms in Connecticut, upstate New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. Richard, and son Andrew, will give talks on growing (including new organic methods they are testing out), harvesting/production, and marketing/distribution.

Josh Volk, owner of Slow Hand Farm (slowhandfarm.com) and frequent contributor to Growing for Market (growingformarket.com), will talk about equipment for small farms (like ours!) and another on organic weed management.

And then, Dr. Gary Chastagner, plant pathologist with Washington State University who many of you met last summer, will tell us the good, bad, and ugly about our peony fields.
Winter Conference (CONT'D)

There's a host of other speakers and topics lined up which you’ll be hearing about over the coming months. Additional details and registration information will soon be posted on APGA’s web site (alaskapeonies.org).

Once again, the conference will be feature-packed with a beginning growers school, silent auction, annual members meeting, Growers Cup Award ceremony, and Round Table discussions.

The general schedule for the conference will be:

**Thursday evening**
- Beginning growers school 6:30-8:30
- Early Registration 6:30-8:30

**Friday**
- Conference Registration 7:45-8:15
- Conference 8:15-5:00
- No-Host Reception 5:30-7:00

**Saturday**
- Registration 7:45-8:15
- Conference 8:15-4:30
- Growers Cup Award
- Membership Meeting

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Alaska Grown / Alaska Quality Peony Bunch Tags

APGA is now offering FREE floral bunch tags to APGA grower members who sign a marketing agreement to use the new Alaska peony grades when marketing and selling their peonies. They have the Alaska Grown logo on one side and the words “Quality Alaska Peonies” on the back.

APGA is offering these free tags to encourage everyone to use the newly established Alaska peony grades. A uniform grading system is one of the first steps toward developing a consistent product that customers can depend on.

APGA is able to offer these tags at no cost to our growers through the continuing support of the Alaska Division of Agriculture.

These tags are wonderful additions to your peony bunches and they show pride in the product you sell.

Sign up now to reserve your tags in the Members Only area of APGA’s web site (alaskapeonies.org).

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Alaska Summer Peonies
From MIKE DRUCE, STERLING

An idea takes root

Like many ideas, the idea for Alaska Summer Peonies began as a casual conversation. Lying on a Gulf Coast beach in Florida with two good friends in June of 2012, my wife LaDawn casually mentioned that two of our three sons had worked part time at a local Peony farm on the peninsula during previous summers. A seed—more appropriately, a root—was planted that led to research, which in turn led to a plan that led to fifteen acres on Robinson Loop in Sterling. The property had once been known as Alaska Little Farm.

By October we had sprayed the weeds, tilled the soil, incorporated as Alaska Summer Inc. operating as Alaska Summer Peonies and then waited until spring.

Spring was a whirlwind of activity: demolition of old buildings, re-applying herbicide, tilling, cutting trees, excavating, fertilizing, and building a fence. For this recently retired teacher, more than once I found myself thinking “It seemed like a good idea at the time.”

The 23 year old son, now turned business partner, subscribed to the philosophy of “Go big or go home.”

His idea was to start with 10,000 peonies. The younger brother giving advice from out of state said, “You have no idea what you’re getting into.” But as I pointed out, I was recently retired; I was looking for a challenge. A good friend helped us ready the field and shape the beds for those 10,000 roots. With two big tractors at work in the field, prepar-
The purpose of Vegas being a part of two communities, the community of Sterling and the community of Alaska Peony Growers. We are proud and appreciative of being members of both.

It is amazing to see what can come of a little casual conversation.

So now we wait until next spring to literally see what comes up.

In re-thinking that challenge I was looking for, I recall those words of my youngest son: “You have no idea what you’re getting into.” I am getting a pretty good idea, and yet I know there are many more challenges to come.

And then there is advice of my middle son, “Go big, or go home.” I would have gone home, but we live on the property, so I am home.

We are now a part of two communities, the community of Sterling and the community of Alaska Peony Growers. We are proud and appreciative of being members of both.

It is amazing to see what can come of a little casual conversation.

This October...

Enter Photos in APGAs Photo Contest
(details on page 3)

Submit Nominations for APGAs Grower’s Cup Award
(details to be emailed out)
I'm very pleased to say our peonies are doing great! Out of the 475 - 2 year old plants, over 100 had gorgeous blooms on them this year. Festiva Maxima, Red Majic, Buckeye Belle, Sarah Bernhardt, Primavera, and Shirley Temple were among those in bloom. Buds arrived June 25th, and continued to bloom through July 25th. The summer was very hot and dry, with thankfully, no botrytis. We planted an additional 700 roots in early June this year. All are doing well, foliage beginning to turn bronze, showing signs of being on the correct “cycle” to sleep nicely this winter. We also planted 1300 additional roots in late July. These are also doing well, growing the fine white root “hairs” prior to winter with no foliage sprouting.

To demonstrate how hardy peonies really are, my mother shipped me a 37 year old peony from my childhood home in upstate N.Y., that NEVER bloomed, planted behind the farm workshop in the shade. It was a gift to my grandmother in 1974, from my husband’s great grandmother. Talk about fate! That peony, this year, bloomed for the first time, 39 years old, and we finally know what variety it is! Gorgeous “Bowl of Beauty”. It was by far the most exciting bloom of the year.

We are working completely off the grid, doing most of the work by hand and pumping water from our well with a generator. The chiller is going in summer of 2014. I believe this will be our most challenging project of all. Please let us know if you would like more information about our farm. We are happy to share...
First off. It was a great year for flowers. Holy mackerel. We had no idea that year 4 could be so magical. We had an unbelievable number of stems on the Duchesse. Our 3-year old Kansas and Festivas went to town showing off their colors. Only problem was... they all bloomed at once. What was normally a 6-week bloom cycle began and ended in 2 weeks. Holy mackerel AGAIN. We couldn't keep up. We estimate we harvested less than 1/3 the total number of stems we could have cut. (Labor, we need more labor.) But nonetheless, it was very rewarding to see such beautiful flowers in all their showy, luxurious, flaunting glory.

Speaking of labor... We had a wonderful intern-type employee this year, Kelly Johnson, who is VERY organically inclined... Which led to numerous discussions as to why we use herbicides. Excellent conversations, but she couldn't talk me out of the value of glyphosate. Over the course of the summer, we developed a “Buns of Steel” program (video and all) designed specifically for compost tea applicators (sort of a little insider joke there). When we were cutting buds off she wanted a photo of herself with the beheaded flowers, and I flashed back to Rita Jo’s famous picture laying in New Zealand Omeo’s cut flowers... So of course we got one of Kelly laying in the flowers too. Not as classic as Rita Jo’s, but still fun. We thought the ExtraTuffs added a nice Alaska touch to the shot.

Second. We had fun showing our beautiful fields to various visitors over the course of the summer. Lydia Clayton, the Peninsula’s CES
person, arranged an in-field plant pathology class for the Kenai-area growers when Dr. Gary Chastagner, pathologist from WSU, visited to collect botrytis samples in Alaska peony fields. He was great, the photo shows Clay training him in the duties of “bridesmaid”. We also hosted a farm tour with 50 people, more or less, attending.

And third. We tried a few new things this year. Last year, the long floppy stems of Jules Elie’ drove me crazy because the stems tended to just lay on the ground or bend over our staking strings. This year, we put Midnight Sun Peonies (CONT’D)
in horizontal netting with 6” x 6” squares for the peonies to grow through. It worked great. The netting did require special care when cutting the stems, the cutter had to jimmy them out either up or down through the netting without hurting it. But those Jules stems were the straightest stems we had this year! Next year, though, we will have the netting a little lower to the ground, and if we were to install netting on other fields, we’d do it much earlier than shown in the photo. It was difficult to put the stems through the holes when they were already up so far.

The last thing I want to tell you about is compost tea. We used a fungal-based compost tea all summer over our entire field. We followed a recipe given by Jeff Lowenfels in his book Teaming with Microbes that involves mixing compost with oatmeal and letting fungus grow into a white mass. After the compost became practically a brick of fungus, we mixed it with water in a 50-gallon batch mixing tank with unsulphered molasses plus kelp or fish emulsion. After aerating it for about 48 hours, we then diluted it 1:3 with water and used a pump and hose line to spray the peonies. We sprayed the entire field about 3 times over the course of the summer. Its kind of a lot of work, but our plants looked fabulous. The foliage had a nice gloss to them, and basically, we just felt good knowing we were feeding the soil
Midnight Sun Peonies
(CONT'D)

and the plants with nice organic food. To find out more about compost tea, be sure to attend APGA’s winter conference where Jeff Lowenfels is one of our featured speakers!!! Oh, and BTW, we’re donating a 5-gallon tin of unsulphered molasses to the silent auction at the conference! It can be yours if the price is right!

North Pole Peonies
From MARJI ILLINGWORTH

Well – it was an interesting summer! Winter until late May and a week later it was 80+ degrees! Wow!!! The month of June was hot and windy. So was July!! ALL we did was water – water – water!! We did get a lot of new peonies in the ground and come July, picking was on a regular schedule.

We had a busy cutting and shipping season. The peonies were beautiful!! MariAna, Mathijs, and Danielle Beks can attest.

All the peonies were sold before any brokers came into the picture so we got top dollar for all our stems. We shipped to several lower 48 states and three Canadian Provinces. We had orders to Hawaii, France, Singapore, and others that we could not fill because we were sold out. The Fairbanks News Miner ran a nice article about our peony shipments.

With the farm growing, we added some new equipment. We designed an off-set fertilizer spreader to apply our first fertilizer and not damage the irrigation system. It is an ordinary drop spreader with the wheels removed mounted on an arm that extends from the four-wheeler. Works pretty slick! As the hot windy season built up, we invested in a two inch pump to increase our water flow to the rows. We also invested in a new, heavy duty, zero turn radius mower to keep up with the weekly task of mowing acres of drive rows between the peonies.

Now we are into Fall, and with early frost and snow falling this gives us the 4th shortest growing season on record! So now we are rushing to put peonies to bed. Saturday, a Middle School “Close-up” group came out to cut down the stems as a fund raiser for their trip. Now we are adding dirt to hills that lost soil with the extensive irrigation that was required during the summer.

We are also finishing up the preparation for next Spring’s plant. The fields are all tilled and marked – Grandpa had a lot of help marking rows. That’s grandchildren Mari Ana

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Fall 2013
Members

No. 9

Members

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North Pole Peonies (cont’d)

and Mathijs Beks and Burgenne Illingworth in the picture.

The hills are in and the drive rows are leveled. The irrigation lines are going in this week. The trenches are in and Chris will be building the lines this week. We are watching the weather and hoping the ground isn’t solid before the trenches are filled!

So soon we will be watching the snow cover the ground and settling in for winter. Come SNOW COME!!!

North Star Alaskan Peonies
From STEVE WALTZ, WILLOW

FALL Farm update....North Star Alaskan Peonies finishing up the planting of 1300 roots.
SilverBirch Farm
From PATTY WARREN

Owned by partners Patty Warren, Linda Harris and Susan Sever.

SilverBirch Farm is located just north of Palmer in the MatSu Valley. Essentially, we are around the corner and up the hill from Graig and Cathy Baker’s Grey Owl Farm.

This was our first year to plant peonies and like a great many other members of this organization it was not without trials and tribulations. Ever since we joined APGA we have been lobbying Linda’s brother (a heavy equip. operator) to come clear us out a patch below the house and to terrace it as it is on a hill. That happy event finally took place the middle of this July and he did a beautiful job. Then the roots arrived so we dashed out and bought a couple of bags of lime and spread it all over the place in a rain storm. How else are you going to get anything done up here in the fall? You also need to know that both Linda and I (Patty) went to the Fair and came home with atrocious colds, so the spirits were willing, but the bodies were having a bit of a problem. So here we were on the day before pickup with a honking big tiller attempting to break ground on seven terraces. We managed to scrape a little soil, but it wasn’t as deep as we wanted. So we did 4 of them and saved the rest for later. The next day was Friday and we went and paid a visit to Meghan and picked up our first 250 roots. For the next 3 days Linda, I and Linda’s sister planted roots then we were burgled!

As any of you who live near potato fields know, Ravens are drawn to fields with disturbed soil because they’ve learned that a bounty of potatoes may be had for the digging. So we get up Tuesday morning to a gang of about 40 ravens plundering our fields. It wasn’t funny at the time but on retrospect it is. Unfortunately I didn’t get a photo of the event due to needing to flush off the invading army. We do not know how many we lost as it is impossible to tell when a root is missing without digging for it. But those hills we dug into still had roots so it could be none or fifty. It took about 4 days for word to reach raven world that our roots were tainted fruit. As it was they dropped several and we were able to replant them, but not in our lovely color coded rows. It is possible that the MatSu Moose
SilverBirch Farm
(CONT'D)

Range will grow its own peony fields, I do hope all the happy hikers and hunters appreciate our efforts.

The photos I have included are of our lovely terraced field, Linda tilling, planting and the finished fields which looked like the mound builders of the Mississippi River Valley were working off a good drunk. We did learn that for next spring and our next 100 roots we are going to go looking for a harrower and a smaller tiller and of course start much earlier, hopefully before those pesky ravens come back!
Springerhill Farm
From VIRGINIA YOUNG

I thought fellow growers would enjoy some pictures of planting peonies in the snow this year. Especially those who like to plant in the Spring.

We were planting these peonies into a 20 year old hay field on Sept 18th. A couple of weeks earlier, we only rototilled up the part of the row actually used for planting the roots. This left a grass turf to with good footing to stand on while working in the field and allowed us to plant even when the ground has gotten wet with rain or, in this case, snow. It snowed two weeks earlier than normal this year and this technique really saved us. Next summer, we will kill off the grass with glyphosate before these new peonies come up which is usually after the middle of June.

[Images of people working in the field with snow and peonies]

[Images of peonies in the snow]
APGA Board Members

Harry Davidson, President
Rachel Christy, MATSU
Patti Floyd, SOL
Jan Hanscom, FBX
Ron Illingworth, FBX
Sue Kent, Secretary
Sue Lincoln, MATSU
Richard Repper, SOL
Shelly Rainwater, Vice President
Virginia Young, Treasurer

For Your Calendars

Oct 12 (9 AM-12)—New Growers School (FBX)
Oct 12 (1-4 PM)—Intermediate Growers School (FBX)
Oct 15—Last day to submit Photos for contest
Nov 4—Backup Due for Reimbursement Transportation Cost Payment Program (RTCP)
November—Nominations accepted for Growers Cup Award (details forthcoming)
December—Nominations accepted for new Board members
Jan 30—New Growers School (Anchorage)
Jan 31/Feb 1—2014 Alaska Peony Growers Winter Conference (Anchorage)

Favorite Farm Equipment

Last Newsletter, we asked people to send in photos of their favorite farm equipment. Only a few people had time to send in photos. Here’s the photos! (P.S., we’ll try again in another Newsletter!)

This is a photo my favorite and most important farm implements; my sun hat, a pair or two of great gloves (and by extension- my right arm/hand), my wonder weeder from New Zealand, and most critical to farm success, my checkbook. Without it, all else is moot.

Michelle LaFriniere
Chilly Root Peony Farm

Attached are a couple of pics of our 2010 model year 35 hp New Holland Tractor. It was purchased from Pioneer Equipment in Palmer, AK. It was flown to EagleSong from Big Lake by Pioneer Helicopter. This was a 35 mile sling load under a Huey helicopter. It reached a speed of 90 mph, but has never gone over 7 mph since.

Mike Williams
EagleSong Family Peony Farm

This is my sister hauling rocks!
Rachel Christy
Alaska Blooms Peony Farm