

Peony Profile: 'Louise Lossing – A Canadian-Bred Peony'

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As an obsessive gardener and not a great fan of writing assignments, I found the most difficult aspect of producing a peony profile was choosing which cultivar to highlight. I considered how the peony collection has changed our lives with new gardening knowledge and techniques, new friends and travel excursions, but most of all with continued anticipation from the first spring shoots, through an extended bloom into the late autumn with fall foliage.

Then I remembered recent CPS Convention flower shows with almost no entries in the category for Canadian introductions. With numerous cultivars to choice from, I had not prepared an entry for this category and obviously neither had most other members and therefore I decided on a Canadian-bred peony.

A favourite peony in our gardens is 'Louise Lossing' registered in 1938 by Evelyn Lossing of Norwich, Ont. This is a very large double white flower with hints of yellow and pink from deep within. (The metal label in the picture measures 2.5 in. at its widest point.)

In our gardens, 'Louise Lossing' begins to bloom mid June approximately 2 weeks after 'Red Charm' and has been chosen as one of the most fragrant varieties at Blossom Hill Nursery. 'Louise Lossing' does not appear to produce seed or seed heads but has up to two side buds per stem giving a very long bloom period. Each season, it is one of the last peonies flowering in our fields.

This variety is a strong grower and produces very dark shiny green foliage that is excellent well into autumn, regardless of drought or record rainfall. The stems measure 36 in. to the base of the flower but are long above the foliage so they are trimmed back to form a tidy 24 in. shrub. I would be interested to know if peony height is usually given as the maximum height of stem or main foliage since it often makes a considerable difference as in this cultivar.

I urge everyone to check their gardens for Canadian-bred peonies and bring them to the CPS Convention flower show this spring. Together we should be able to encourage many visitors to grow Canadian.