

# Herbaceous Peony Care

## Water & Soil

New peonies like deep soakings **only once a week**. Consider drip lines or hand watering instead of overhead sprinklers. Remember that peonies do not like wet feet, so be careful not to over-water as it can cause rot. It is essential that your peony be planted in well-draining soil so that water doesn't collect around the plant. To do this, you can use your own compost or our bagged leaf compost if you have clay soil. Established peonies require less supplemental watering but still benefit from infrequent, deep soakings, especially during times of drought.

Add a **thin** layer of compost at the **drip line** to nourish your peonies in spring and fall. Do not spread anything above the root zone, and this includes mulch! It's important to check the planting depth periodically. Around here in zone 7, the pink or white buds (called eyes) should **remain a ½ inch below the surface** of the soil. Keep the area clean around your peonies to increase the air flow and reduce competition from weeds.

## Pruning

Herbaceous peonies should be cut back sometime in fall. Exactly when to do this depends on how your peonies look. If the leaves are still healthy and shiny, leave them for now. If they look dull, are dotted with red or brown spots, or are covered with powdery mildew, cut stems back to 3" above the soil and toss in the trash to keep any disease out of your garden. Remember, early decline is common in newly planted peonies. They are not dead; they just fade early.

## As a Cut Flower

Herbaceous peonies make some of the best cut flowers on the planet. Cut them when the green covering on the bud begins to break open. If you cut them too early, they won't open, too late and they won't last. Try to leave as many leaves on the plant as possible to ensure that the plant can make enough energy to produce lots of healthy flowers next season. **Pro Tip:** To preserve your herbaceous flowers for months after their bloom time, simply cut them as described above and store them in the fridge. They can be stored in a vase with water protected by a flower sleeve for up to 6 months if you continually change out the water. Keep an eye out for any mold or fungus and remove it asap. It takes practice to store peonies successfully, but we encourage you to try it!

## Staking

Most herbaceous peonies need to be staked. For individual plants, you can use grow-through rings consisting of a circular grid with attached legs. To use, place the ring in the ground over the root in the fall or late winter. Let the plant grow through the grid in the spring. Raise the grid and push the legs into the ground when buds begin to form (it helps to have a friend lend a hand!). Tie the grid to taller stakes if you have a taller peony.

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