

Adelman awarded for lifelong commitment to peonies

Feel-Good STORY

Saluting the people that make
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BY SAPHARA HARRELL
Of Salem Reporter

When Carol Adelman was a pre-schooler, her father would take her across the street to visit Reverend Hartwig's garden in Salem, where he had 300 varieties of peonies.

Those early trips spawned a lifelong love of the flower for Adelman.

Years later, her father would tell her if she wanted to start a business, she needed to look for a need or deficiency.

Adelman said peonies are found on abandoned homesteads or in neglected cemeteries still growing.

"I decided there was a deficiency," she said.

After 25 years raising apples with her husband Jim, the market had crashed. Then, the pair decided to start a peony garden in 1996.

Adelman said people showed up to their Brooks farm the first day they were open.

"Jim decided maybe this would work," she recalled.

These days, hundreds of people flock to the Adelman Peony Gardens in the spring to look at and buy blooms from the garden where there are more than 500 varieties. The garden sells divisions of the peony plant all over the northern hemisphere, in places like Latvia and Germany.

Adelman recalled the past spring when, "People covered the whole 25 acres of peonies to see all the different kinds and get all the exercise and just be outdoors."

She was recently awarded the Bertrand H. Farr Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Peony Society.

It's given to members who have contributed to the society and peony world in numerous ways, over many years. Adelman has been on the American Peony Society board of directors for more than 15 years.

"Throughout her life, Carol has served as one of the peony's most respected and knowledgeable promoters. Her willingness to encourage others and share her knowledge has inspired thousands of peony enthusiasts," the award said.

"Carol and her husband Jim are legendary competitors and supporters of the (American Peony Society) Annual



Carol Adelman was recently awarded with a lifetime achievement award from the American Peony Society.

Submitted photo

Flower Show and Exhibition held at our annual conventions. They typically bring hundreds of fresh blooms, and breadth of their entries has provided a dazzling showcase of beautifully grown, premier quality peonies, including rare, seldom-seen varieties."

In 2002, Adelman brought her flowers to the American Peony Society convention for the first time. She won best of show and had several flowers make the court of honor, the next highest ranking, in her first showing.

She described it as "totally unbelievable."

She's won best of show nine times since then.

Adelman said the Willamette growing area has an advantage over Midwest competitors.

That's because her plants can grow bigger in the winter without freezing temperatures.

"When the sun comes out and the snow melts off, the bud doesn't have much time to grow larger," she explained.

In 2017, a book she co-authored titled "Peony: The Best Varieties for Your Garden" made the *New York Times* summer reading list.

Adelman has been spending more time hybridizing peonies as her family members take over day to day operations of the farm.

That means she's coming up with new varieties by taking the pollen from one plant and putting it on another.

She said it takes 12 years to get a new peony on the market, because of how long it takes to multiply and grow new plants.

There's an orange, coral flower she hybridized and now has two plants of, but she's waiting until there are 25 to 50 plants before she sells it.

She's careful not to post photos of the flowers she's creating because she



said people will call every year asking when it's going to become available.

Adelman has an almost encyclopedic knowledge of the different peony varieties and even with more than 500 at her farm, she still manages to fill a legal pad with ones she wants to someday grow.

She said many families have peonies that are more than 100 years old. When there's a wedding or graduation, they'll

gift a piece of the plant so they can have it in their home.

Peonies only flower for a short period of time, with each bloom lasting about a week to 10 days typically in May and June.

"If they bloomed all the time, they wouldn't be so special to us," Adelman said. "That makes springtime real exciting."

St. Edwards hosting blood drive Thursday

St. Edward Catholic Church will host an American Red Cross blood drive on Thursday, Jan 27, from 1 to 6:30 p.m.

There is currently a big demand for blood of all types by hospitals and clinics.

To schedule an appointment call 1-800-RED-CROSS or sign up online at RedCrossBlood.org, using sponsor code: stedwardkeizer.

St. Edward Catholic Church is located at 5303 River Road N.

