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Garden Notes

No. 7



A Visit with
A. DESSERT
Chenonceaux, France



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THE BEST OF DESSERT'S NEW INTRODUCTIONS

A Visit to Dessert's Peony Garden

From the first day of my trip to Europe, I looked forward with very great pleasure to my visit with Dessert, who is one of the greatest originators of new varieties of Peonies the world has ever seen, and I was so much interested in his garden that I made three visits to it.

The first was made immediately after my visit with Denis, the celebrated amateur Iris grower, and my object was to see the Tree Peonies, and to see also the famous Chenonceaux chateau. Unfortunately there had been a very untimely freeze in France in the late spring and the Tree Peonies were a complete failure, but my trip was a great success for I met M. Dessert and his famous daughter, Marcelle. I say "famous" because her father has named one of his good Peonies in her honor, and so her name is repeated in thousands of gardens by flower lovers who do not know that they are speaking the name of Dessert's only child. The father and daughter live together in a typical French home, surrounded by a walled garden of three or four acres, and here I met them and enjoyed their hospitality.

Chenonceaux is a very small, one-street, town, so small in fact that when on my second trip from Paris, on going to Cook's office and asking for a railroad ticket to Chenonceaux, I was told that it was not on a railroad. But I knew better for I had made my other trips on the train and so was able to convince the agent and get a ticket. Chenonceaux is one of the chateau towns, and Cooks' usually have tourists visit it on one of their two or three day automobile trips which includes several other chateau towns.

M. Dessert has originated over thirty double Chinese Peonies, in addition to which he has to his credit several good Single and Japanese sorts. For years the world has thought that THERESE was his greatest triumph, but two years ago and again last year his newer variety, JEANNOT, produced wonderful bloom in my garden, and I am told that this year it kept up its record, so it may later be recognized as his greatest introduction. It is fortunate that JEANNOT is a very late variety for that is what the Peony world needs, and in addition to its lateness, it not only has marvelous

quality, but it is apparently as good in holding its quality as ELWOOD PLEAS, which I believe now holds the record for endurance. Of course I should tell you that the color of the new favorite is dainty pink, or really pink and white, and it pleases us late in the season for the same reason that his older variety, UMBELLATA ROSEA, pleases us earlier in the season. I do not believe that UMBELLATA ROSEA is known as it should be, for it is the very best in its class, and sometime when a Peony show is held early enough to exhibit its bloom, I expect it to take the highest honors. I cannot help wondering if the Peony Society members who sent in low votes on UMBELLATA ROSEA were not voting on some inferior variety under this name. At any rate, M. Dessert has great reason to be proud, both of his extra early and extra late varieties.

THERESE is a world favorite, and instead of becoming cheaper with the years, it has increased in price and now sells at about three times as much as it did ten years ago. Quality is the only thing which enables it to make such a record. Its color is lilac-pink and its size and shape are as near perfect as any enthusiast could wish.

Within the past two years Dessert has placed six new varieties on the market, AUGUSTE DESSERT, RENEE MARIE, CLEMENCEAU, CANDEUR, ARLEQUIN and PERRETTE. I have all these varieties growing in my garden but I am not ready to pass judgment upon them yet, but I hope that at least one of them may be in the JEANNOT-THERESE class. This year he has four new varieties, ELISA, LIBELLULE, MEDALON and RITA and I have purchased all of them on my faith in M. Dessert.

SOUV. DE LOUIS BIGOT, RAOUL DESSERT, MADAME JULES DESSERT and GINETTE, which are all older varieties, are entitled to enter any world contest for both quality and beauty. The first, SOUV. DE LOUIS BIGOT, has the same wonderful true pink which is admired so much in Richardson's WALTER FAXON; in especially good seasons RAOUL DESSERT has shown greater size and equal quality with SOLANGE; MADAME JULES DESSERT, a wonderful pink and white, flat, wide-opening bloom has won great honors at the shows of the Northwest Peony and Iris Society; and many times I have seen GINETTE equal THERESE in size and beauty. All of these deserve the best of care in our Peony gardens for they are able to make records for us.

Of course not all his introductions can have the same quality, and we do not wish them to have. At the Detroit

show several years ago VICTOIRE DE LA MARNE and AVIATEUR REYMOND attracted very favorable notice. but since that time they have not been prominent at any of our shows. Not only is their size remarkable but I found in talking with M. Dessert that he is very fond of their color. which is an amaranth red, and he has given his own name to a new variety with very similar coloring.

MARCELLE DESSERT is a white variety which is remarkable for the depth of its petals and the looseness of its bloom. TOURANGELLE is one of the sorts that must be coaxed to show how beautiful it is, and its buds must be covered with heavy, thick paper bags as they begin to unfold and the bags must not be removed until the bloom is in a well shaded room. When this is done, however, the owner becomes enthusiastic and is apt to talk of ethereal coloring, heavenly beauty and transcendent loveliness.

M. MARTIN CAHUZAC has earned the name of the "Black Peony," for when I ask the male visitor in my garden which bloom I shall cut for him, I very often get the reply, "Let me have one of those black ones." Of course, it is not really black, but growing among the white and light pink varieties the contrast is so great that it is natural for the visitor to think of it as black. Its color is most attractive to men. If you want to plant a garden to grow flowers for cutting to please men, be liberal in your planting of CAHUZAC.

I am not sure that LAURA DESSERT is the best yellow Peony in the world, but I am sure there is no better yellow one, and I feel that a seed from this variety is most likely to grow into the plant which will win the One Hundred Dollar Harrison Memorial Prize for a better yellow Peony. All Peony enthusiasts are anxious to see a better yellow Peony than we now have.

ROSA BONHEUR is a low-growing, delicate pink Peony and is, I believe, the slowest growing variety originated by Dessert. There is a splendid demand for it all the time. AURORE has exactly the colors you would expect it to have when you think of its name.

ESTAFFETTE, when planted in full sun and allowed to grow naturally, has produced a perfect fountain-shaped plant, whose large pink blooms held on uniformly drooping stems, made the prettiest picture I have ever had in my garden.

MADAME MANCHET is not as good as JEANNOT but its virtues are its extreme late blooming season, good size

and splendid keeping quality. The market grower will want it for supplying fine blooms very late in the season. It has a splendid shade of pink, better I think than that in LIVINGSTONE (Crousse) whose virtue also is late blooming.

SUZETTE always makes me think of a bright light in a dark room. I can feel its warmth and brightness. MADAME DE TREYERAN is for cut flowers and it will stand the closest inspection, but it is not a landscape variety. ROSETTE is a splendid companion for UMBELLATA ROSEA. I am not sure that it is an improvement upon the older variety, but I believe it is one or two days later, and so will have a place of its own to fill.

M. Dessert was very fortunate in selecting a very high grade seedling to name in honor of his wife, and MADAME AUGUSTE DESSERT, although placed on the market over twenty years ago still ranks among the very good Peonies. The plant is erect growing and the bloom is violet-rose in color and semi-double in form.

GERMAINE BIGOT, although twenty years old, shows some of the splendid quality and coloring which the world has so much admired in the two very new varieties, PRESIDENT WILSON and JEANNOT. In looking at the new favorites my mind instantly reverts to GERMAINE BIGOT with the thought that it is probably in their ancestral line.

EUGENE BIGOT is another of Dessert's oldest introductions, going back nearly thirty years, and I have heard some enthusiasts speak of it as a splendid red. I think KARL ROSENFELD, PHILIPPE RIVOIRE, MARY BRAND and MADAME GAUDICHAU are very much better, but the Peony world is not unanimous in this decision.

PETITE RENEE is not only Dessert's greatest novelty, but is also one of the world's sensational varieties. Its color is a peculiarly pleasing shade of pink, and while the main central stems show nearly full double flowers, the lateral stems at the same time show perfect Japanese blooms. I am sure its virtues will result in a much higher rating for this variety in the next symposium.

DR. H. BARNSBY, DISTINCTION, LA FONTAINE, ODETTE and POMPONETTE do not seem to me to be of quite as high quality as the ones I have mentioned, but I will give them further time to show their worth for I have such a very high regard for M. Dessert that I know he believes them to be worth while.



MAD JULES DESSERT

A PRIZE WINNING VARIETY

MARGUERITE DESSERT, CLAIRETTE, EGLANTINE, LA FIANCEE, LUCIENNE, L'ETINCELANTE, MADELEINE GAUTHIER, PERLE BLANCHE and THE BRIDE, are all Single varieties with ratings high enough to entitle them to admission to any garden. I find that Singles are gaining in favor every year.

On two of my visits I met M. Dessert's favorite niece and he has shown his regard for her by using her name for two of his introductions, his largest Single, MARGUERITE DESSERT, and his very newest one, RITA, this being Marguerite's pet name. Unfortunately I did not get to see this variety in bloom.

I will never forget any of my Chenonceaux visits and the memory of the first one will remain for a peculiar reason of its own. I left Dessert's garden and went over to the chateau for an hour or so, and when I returned, as I was quite warm, M. Dessert asked me to have a cool drink. He brought out a bottle of Chenonceaux white wine, and as the wine at Denis' had produced no bad results, I did not hesitate to try this also. But soon I found my head swimming and I did not feel at all like Lee Bonnewitz, and as it was time to go to the train I began to doubt my ability to get to the station. M. Dessert wanted to call a carriage but I realized that vigorous exercise might help me to keep control of myself, and so I started out on a brisk walk, and by pinching myself and concentrating all my thoughts on the necessity of reaching the railroad station, I finally made my train all right. But on my succeeding visits I knew enough to let the "white wine" alone. M. Dessert was quite amused by my experience for he told me that Chenonceaux is particularly proud of its wine. However, I prefer to spend my money for its Peonies which I am sure have given it far more fame than has its wine.

The next issue of this series of Garden Notes will cover a report of my visits to the Iris Gardens of M. Millet and of Cayeaux and Le Clerc.

LEE R. BONNEWITZ.

Van Wert, Ohio, August 18, 1922.

(Second of a series of Garden Notes on visits to prominent gardens of France and England)