

# ALASKA PEONY COOPERATIVE: GEARING UP FOR PEONY Season



## MASTERCLASS CLIFF'S NOTES:

- Orders are filling in quickly! Make sure to place your standing order for peonies as soon as possible!
- Martha is the Executive Director and Sales Manager for Alaska Peony Cooperative. Nine members are currently active in the Alaska Peony Cooperative.
- They started in 2015 with all members having the same goals in mind.
- Members are all spread out all over Alaska.
- Cooperative is an equal part owner and an equal part vote in the business. Membership and joining fees are usually required. Seek out development centers if you are interested in creating a cooperative!
- The cooperative can set their own pricing of their products based on competitors or industry standards.
- The farms range from 200 plants to over 9,000 plants. The smaller farms can sell directly to florists whereas the larger farms sell to wholesalers.
- Check out PlantGem if you are interested in ordering roots!
- The mature plant is anywhere from 5-7 years old. You can get 30-50 stems per plant.
- Martha got her start in the industry by taking farm tours and really learning about the farming dos and don'ts.
- Make sure to grow enough plants just in case you lose a few plants along the way.
- Homer, Alaska has the Festival of Peonies
- Field season starts on May 15th and harvest starts around the 4th of July. The first box expects to ship on July 5 and the last box usually ends the 2nd week of August.
- If you want a weekly or bi-weekly order, email Martha!
- All winter long there are still meetings and efforts to make the sipping season the best it can be!
- APC uses UPS and FedEx to ship products.
- Alaska Peony is looking for new members to join the cooperative in the future.
- Cooperative exists to educate the industry. Check out their blogs!
- Peonies need a dormant period to grow. They need below-freezing temperatures to thrive. The colors are very saturated due to the cold soil and sunlight!



- It is important to look at the photos when ordering peonies and not look at the name.
- The Cooperative currently has 48 varieties of peonies.
- There are different sizes/grades available to fit your design needs. You will always get the larger blooms from the Alaska Peony Cooperative.
- Peonies have seven to ten days of vase life. The fewer petals the lower the vase life.
- They like to ship on Tuesdays and arrive usually on Wednesdays to be ready for your Saturday events.
- Every farm has their own coolers.
- Do not dry store your peonies after 2 weeks. Keep the cooler nice and cold when you have peonies.
- Order a minimum of 20 stems and you can mix and match stems. There are four different box sizes 25, 50, 150, 250 stems.
- Rooted Farmers required an account to be made, 24 hours acceptance period.
- They can ship anywhere in the United States if UPS and FedEx can get to your area in 24 hours.
- Make sure to put them in water and out of the direct sunlight when you first get your peonies. Peonies will open faster if it is warm.
- Check out the Peony Journal for educational articles and Press Page for cutting guides and how-to videos!

**Martha Lojewski is the Executive Director & Sales Manager of Alaska Peony Cooperative.** *Martha has owned and operated a 4,000 root peony farm together with her family in Alaska since 2014, but farming is not something that ever crossed her mind prior to that. She left the world of food and beverage management when her second child was born because of the grueling hours. Martha and her husband carved a peony farm out of the virgin Alaskan forest they purchased specifically for the endeavor. The remote property is located off the grid, which isn't unusual for Alaska but makes the challenge of farming just a little more complicated. It is a beautiful slice of paradise with direct views of the tallest mountain in North America, which helped them decide upon the name, Mt. McKinley Peonies.*

*In 2015 a group of peony farmers founded the Alaska Peony Cooperative to collectively market and sell stems for all members together. Since incorporating, the cooperative has grown each year and built a strong brand and customer base. Martha is a founding member and has served as the Sales Manager since the beginning, but all members actively participate in the success of their unique farmer-owned cooperative with a clearly defined shared vision. The Alaska Peony Cooperative has a reputation for their premium product and concierge-level customer service. Martha is passionate about what she does, and it shows every time she speaks with a fellow peony lover.*

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