

Paeonia suffruticosa

[Synonyms : *Paeonia arborea*, *Paeonia moutan*, *Paeonia papaveracea*]

MOUNTAIN TREE PEONY is a deciduous shrub. Native to western China and to Tibet it has large shaggy, white to pink flowers with reddish-purple blotches at petal bases and many golden stamens.

It is also known as Common tree peony, *Hua Wang* (Chinese), King of flowers, Mountain peony, Moutan, Moutan peony, *Pivoňka keřovitá* (Czech), *Pivonka polokrovitá* (Slovak), *Pivoňka polokřovitá* (Czech), Rock's tree peony, Tree peony, and Tree peony.

This is a parent of many single and double cultivated varieties.

Suffruticosa means 'somewhat shrubby'.

Mountain tree peony has been in cultivation in China since at least the 7th Century (a youngster compared with other peonies grown there) where in 700 AD a garden variety register was established.

The shrub was introduced to Japan from China in about 734 AD, and in some parts of that Country the flowers have long been eaten as a vegetable. The flowers formed part of Chinese culture and were referred to in literature and depicted in art. Through the latter medium and from ecstatic descriptions heard from home-coming missionaries and other travellers Europe came to learn of the joys of mountain tree peony long before its introduction to that Continent – which was not until about 1790.

Medicinally, the roots have long featured in local Chinese remedies for controlling spasms.