

Plant of the Month, June 2019

Paeonia rockii – by Joan McCaughey



At the end of January 2008 I sowed seeds of a *Paeonia rockii* hybrid 3808 from the AGS seed distribution. The pot was left outside in a sheltered area and I noted that the seed had germinated, although not the date as peonies often put roots only down first. Over the years one plant was potted on, eventually being planted out in the garden. At last in 2016 I was rewarded with one bloom although with better care and cultivation this might have happened sooner. This year 6 exquisite flowers appeared – large soft white petals with a ruffled edge, a deep purple/maroon base, and golden sepals plus a beautiful scent. As we have a cold, exposed garden it is planted in the most sheltered spot which may account for its tall rather straggly growth ~1-2 metres tall. However the blooms on this paeonia named after Joseph Rock were well worth the wait ..

Paeonia rockii occurs in Gansu Province, in North-west China. It was introduced to the West and the classic form bred from seeds collected by the American geographer Joseph Rock in 1925—1926 from a peony with big white flower and dark purple basal blotch found in a lamasery of Choni County in the south of Gansu Province. In the wild, there is much variation in colour and form, and these may be described as Gansu hybrids.

<http://www.paeo.de/aaa/03689.html>