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### **Peony blooms attract ants**

Domenghini says ants depend on blooms for nectar

*By Maddy Rohr, K-State Research and Extension news service*

MANHATTAN, Kan. — If you're noticing multiple varieties of peonies growing in the garden, or ants crawling on the buds, Kansas State University horticulture expert Cynthia Domenghini said this is common and no cause for concern.

"Peonies produce nectar on the outside of buds which attracts ants looking for an early season food source," Domenghini said. "There is a myth that ants are necessary to get the buds to open."

Blooms are not dependent upon ants. Rather, ants depend on the blooms for sustenance, Domenghini said. Ants are not problematic for the blooms and insecticide is not warranted.

"Some sources state ants help deter pests that would cause harm to the blooms," Domenghini said. "As the blooms reach their peak, ants typically move to their next food source."

Gardeners who intend to harvest peony flowers for the home should cut them before the bloom is fully opened, preferably early in the morning. Buds will continue to open once placed in a vase of water, Domenghini said.

"If ants are present when harvesting, hold the stem upside-down, close to the bloom and gently shake to dislodge ants. The blooms can also be lightly washed to remove ants," Domenghini said.

Domenghini and her colleagues in K-State's Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a weekly [Horticulture Newsletter](#) with tips for maintaining home landscapes and gardens. The newsletter is available to [view online](#) or can be delivered by email each week.

Interested persons can also send their garden and yard-related questions to Domenghini at [cdom@ksu.edu](mailto:cdom@ksu.edu), or contact your [local K-State Research and Extension office](#).

**FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS:** Links used in this story

K-State Horticulture Newsletter, <https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/newsletters/index.html>

K-State Research and Extension local offices, <https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations.html>

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