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Division

United States Standards for Grades of Cut Peonies in the Bud

Effective September 6, 2016

This issue of the United States Standards for Grades of Cut Peonies in the Bud (81 FR 51297) supersedes the previous issue which has been in effect since April 1, 1938.

Voluntary U.S. grade standards are issued under the authority of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, which provides for the development of official U.S. grades to designate different levels of quality. These grade standards are available for use by producers, suppliers, buyers, and consumers. As in the case of other standards for grades of fresh and processed fruits, vegetables, and specialty crops these standards are designed to facilitate orderly marketing by providing a convenient basis for buying and selling, for establishing quality control programs, and for determining loan values.

The U.S. grade standards and inspection instructions for all fresh and processed fruits, vegetables, and specialty crops are available on the internet and upon request at the address below. These documents provide detailed interpretations of the grade standards and provide step-by-step procedures for grading the product.

Grade standards are issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) after careful consideration of all data and views submitted during rulemaking. The Department welcomes suggestions for improving the standards in future revisions. Comments may be submitted to, and copies of standards and inspection instructions obtained from:

Director, Specialty Crops Inspection Division
Specialty Crops Program,
USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, STOP 0240
Washington, D.C. 20250

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 1621-1627.

Note: Compliance with the provisions of these standards shall not excuse failure to comply with the provisions of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, or with applicable State laws and regulations.

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United States Standards for Grades of Commodity Cut Peonies in the Bud

Section	Page No.
Grades	2
§51.4475 U.S. No. 1.....	2
§51.4476 U.S. No. 2.....	2
Reserved	3
§51.4477 Reserved.....	3
Application of Tolerances	3
§51.4478 Application of tolerances.....	3
Standards for Bunching	3
§51.4479 Standards for bunching.....	3
Definitions	4
§51.4480 Similar varietal characteristics.....	4
§51.4481 Fresh.....	4
§51.4482 Strong.....	4
§51.4483 Well trimmed.....	4
§51.4484 Fairly well trimmed.....	4
§51.4485 Stems.....	4
§51.4486 Fairly straight.....	4
§51.4487 Well shaped.....	4
§51.4488 Firm.....	4
§51.4489 Normally expanded.....	5
§51.4490 Overmature.....	5
§51.4491 Puff ball.....	5
§51.4492 Bull head or hard head.....	5
§51.4493 Wood head.....	5
§51.4494 Damage.....	5
§51.4495 Diameter.....	5
§51.4496 Serious damage.....	5

Grades

§51.4475 U.S. No. 1.

“**U.S. No. 1**” consists of peonies of similar varietal characteristics which have fresh, strong, well trimmed, and unbroken stems which are fairly straight. The buds shall be well shaped, fresh, firm with calyxes normally expanded but not overmature; free from puff balls, bull heads, and wood heads. The buds and stems shall be free from decay and freezing injury and from damage caused by dirt or other foreign material, discoloration, moisture, disease, insects, mechanical or other means.

- (a) Each bud shall be not less than 1 inch in diameter and, unless otherwise specified, the overall length of bud and stem shall be not less than 24 inches, but in no case shall the overall length be less than 20 inches.
- (b) **Tolerances.** In order to allow for variations incident to proper grading and handling, the following tolerances, by count, are provided as specified:
 - (1) **For defects.** Five percent for peonies in any lot which fail to meet the requirements of this grade, including therein not more than one-half of 1 percent for peonies which are affected by decay.
 - (2) **For size.** Ten percent for peonies in any lot which fail to meet the specified size requirements, including therein not more than 5 percent for buds which fail to meet the specified minimum diameter.

§51.4476 U.S. No. 2.

“**U.S. No. 2**” consists of peonies of similar varietal characteristics, which have fresh, fairly well trimmed, and unbroken stems which are not badly curved or crooked. The buds shall be fresh, firm with calyxes normally expanded but not overmature; free from puff balls, bull heads, and wood heads. The buds and stems shall be free from decay and from damage caused by freezing, and from serious damage caused by dirt or other foreign material, discoloration, moisture, disease, insects, mechanical or other means.

- (a) Each bud shall be not less than 7/8 inch in diameter, and, unless otherwise specified, the overall length of bud and stem shall be not less than 20 inches but in no case shall the overall length be less than 18 inches.
- (b) **Tolerances.** In order to allow for variations incident to proper grading and handling, the following tolerances, by count, are provided as specified:
 - (1) **For defects.** Ten percent for peonies in any lot which fail to meet the requirements of this grade, including therein not more than 5 percent for defects causing serious damage, and including in this latter amount not more than 1 percent for peonies which are affected by decay.

- (2) **For size.** Ten percent for peonies in any lot which fail to meet the specified size requirements, including therein not more than 5 percent for buds which fail to meet the specified minimum diameter.

Reserved

§51.4477 Reserved.

Application of Tolerances

§51.4478 Application of tolerances.

The contents of individual packages in the lot, based on sample inspection, are subject to the following limitations:

- (a) For a tolerance of 10 percent or more, individual packages in any lot may contain not more than one and one-half times the tolerance specified, except that when the package contains 15 specimens or less, individual packages may contain not more than double the tolerance specified: *Provided*, That the average for the entire lot is within the tolerance specified for the grade.
- (b) For a tolerance of less than 10 percent, individual packages in any lot may contain not more than double the tolerance specified except that at least one defective and one off-size specimen may be permitted in any package: *Provided*, That the average for the entire lot is within the tolerance specified for the grade.

Standards for Bunching

§51.4479 Standards for bunching.

- (a) Cut peonies in the bud may be packed loose or bunched. When bunched, each bunch shall contain 12 peonies, having buds which are reasonably uniform in size and development and stems which are reasonably uniform in length. When bunched, the peonies shall be arranged so that the buds form a flat surface across the top of the bunch. Each bunch shall be held intact by two rubber bands, one placed 5 - 6 inches below the base of the buds and the other 3 - 4 inches from the base of the stems.
- (1) It is recommended that a No. 30 rubber band doubled be used 3 - 4 inches from the base of the stem and a No. 18 rubber band not doubled be used 5 - 6 inches from the base of the buds.
- (b) In order to allow for variations incident to proper bunching not more than 5 percent, by count, of the bunches in any container may fail to meet the requirements for bunching.

Definitions

§51.4480 Similar varietal characteristics.

“**Similar varietal characteristics**” means that the stems, foliage and buds of the peonies have the same general character of growth and color.

§51.4481 Fresh.

“**Fresh**” means that the buds and foliage are bright, not badly wilted, limp, or flabby.

§51.4482 Strong.

“**Strong**” means that the stem is fairly stiff and sturdy enough to hold the bud in a reasonably erect position.

§51.4483 Well trimmed.

“**Well trimmed**” means that all lateral or side buds, and all foliage on the lowest 6 to 8 inches of the stem, have been neatly removed but the foliage on the remainder of the stem has not been removed to the extent that the appearance of the peony is damaged.

§51.4484 Fairly well trimmed.

“**Fairly well trimmed**” means that all the lateral or side buds, and all the foliage on the lowest 6 to 8 inches of the stem, has been neatly removed but the foliage on the remainder of the stem has not been removed to the extent that the appearance of the peony is seriously damaged.

§51.4485 Stems.

“**Stems**” means the flower stalks with the attached foliage.

§51.4486 Fairly straight.

“**Fairly straight**” means that the stem is of normal growth and is not more than slightly curved or crooked.

§51.4487 Well shaped.

“**Well shaped**” means that the bud is symmetrical, not lopsided or otherwise deformed.

§51.4488 Firm.

“**Firm**” means that the bud is fairly compact and yields slightly to moderate pressure of the fingers.

§51.4489 Normally expanded.

“**Normally**” expanded means that the calyxes have expanded to the extent that the true color of the outer petals is exposed. At this stage of development the two large calyxes and the outer petals at the top of the bud have developed to the extent that they will yield to slight pressure of the fingers.

§51.4490 Overmature.

“**Overmature**” means that the bud is soft and the outer petals have started to unfold.

§51.4491 Puff ball.

“**Puff ball**” means a bud of poor substance which usually expands prematurely. The bud is usually long, soft on one side and feels soft to very soft in comparison with a normal bud of the same variety.

§51.4492 Bull head or hard head.

“**Bull head or hard head**” means a bud which is hard to very hard and which will not open or expand.

§51.4493 Wood head.

“**Wood head**” means a bud which is hard, usually flat, with the petals separated at the top and forming a small opening through which the interior of the bud can be seen.

§51.4494 Damage.

“**Damage**” means any defect, or any combination of defects, which materially detracts from the appearance or marketing quality of the cut peonies. Inconspicuous anthracnose spots shall not be considered as damage.

§51.4495 Diameter.

“**Diameter**” means the greatest diameter measured through the center of the bud at right angles to a line running from the base to the top of the bud.

§51.4496 Serious damage.

“**Serious damage**” means any defect, or any combination of defects which seriously detracts from the appearance or marketing quality of the cut peonies.