

Pretty in pink at Peony Farm

By R. I. Nagy

Spring Hill Peony Farm recently hosted another series of successful Open Paddock days, despite changes to the usual format brought about by COVID-19 restrictions.

Owner-operators Mac and Nicky Barry were happy to welcome people - including a number of visitors from metropolitan Melbourne - back to their picturesque property to take part in the annual peony-picking event.

Open Paddock days involve visitors travelling to the farm to pick their own bunches of peonies for a fee.

A typical experience includes a gentle one-kilometre walk along a track through bushland and paddocks to the field gate, where everyone is greeted and given instructions on how to choose the best peony specimens for picking (tip: look for not-quite-open buds that have the softness of a marshmallow when gently squeezed).

Visitors are then left to wander the rows at their leisure, picking armfuls of the striking, pink-hued flowers

and enjoying the scenery and relaxed atmosphere.

At the conclusion of each session, everyone meanders back to the car-park with a hand-picked bunch of flowers, gorgeous photos and memories of a unique day out.

This year, due to COVID-19 restrictions, numbers were more tightly controlled, and attendees had to pre-register details in advance when buying tickets.

Ticket-holders were also required to bring their own secateurs, wear masks and practise physical distancing.

Peonies are strong-growing perennials that are highly prized as cut flowers.

There are eight varieties grown at Spring Hill Peony Farm, although there are usually only three varieties flowering during the Open Paddock days.

Each colour is an early, mid or late season variety, and availability of stock is determined by growing conditions in winter and spring.

Cut flowers are sold through Farmer's Markets or at the farm during November.

The beauty of Spring Hill's peonies and the farm's attractive surroundings have made it a popular destination for flower lovers and photographers, as well as a favoured setting for Instagram shoots and marriage proposals.

Peonies have been used as a wedding flower in Chinese culture for centuries, and were gradually adopted in the west to represent similar themes of romance, prosperity and happy marriage.

As a link to these traditions, the farm also operates a venue called The Little Church, which encompasses a charming timber structure dating from the 1890s and a contemporary pavilion that can be booked for a variety of private weddings, functions and gatherings.

Spring Hill Peony Farm's Open Paddock days usually run in November each year, although dates are subject to change. Tickets are limited, so it's important to pre-book.

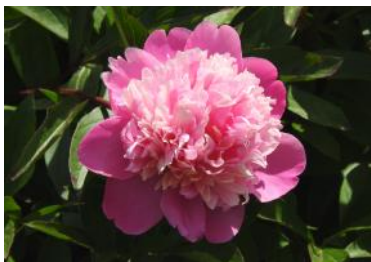
For further information, keep an eye on the Spring Hill Peony Farm's website or Facebook and Instagram accounts.



Spring Hill Peony Farm owner-operator Mac Barry on-site to oversee proceedings.



The farm attracts big crowds during flowering season.



A deep pink peony in full bloom.



Left: Nine-month old Juno enjoying a photo shoot beside the flower beds.

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