

# TASMANIAN *life*

TASMANIA'S OWN LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

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**SERENE AND GENTLE  
ARTIST MICHAYE BOULTER**

**HILL STREET CHURCH  
A STUNNING HOME**

**HARMONY HILL  
AN ALL-ORGANIC  
SPA RETREAT**

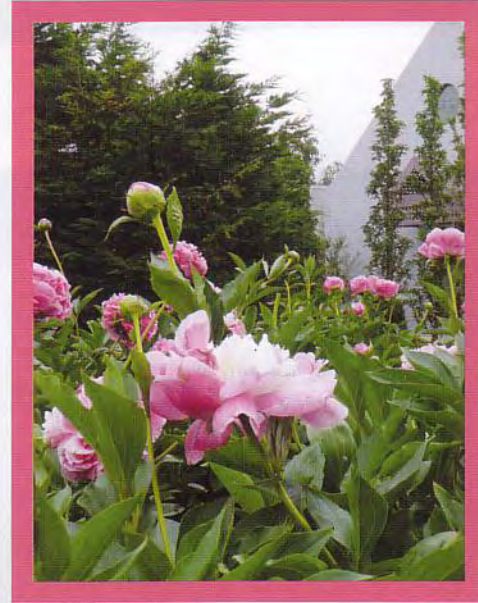


**TASMANIA'S FABULOUS  
STANLEY**  
12 PAGE SPECIAL FEATURE

**SURFING AND PLAYING  
ON THE BEACH**  
PHOTOGRAPHER STUART GIBSON

**THE TASSAL STORY  
FROM EGG TO PLATE**





# the exquisite peony flower



The exquisite peony flower is considered by many to be the most romantic plant in the world. Thanks to their large, rose-like, fragrant flowers they've become popular favourites with Australian brides. Tasmanian peony farmers Richard and Belinda Weston fell in the love with the flowers after a chance meeting with a peony grower almost 15 years ago. Today they have 40 different varieties on their Brighton property.

"Peonies are so romantic and old-world, and it's quite amazing how many brides will hold off for the main peony season in November and December," Belinda says. "And we're now able to extend the season with early varieties and, with later varieties, tap into the Christmas market for cut flowers."

The Weston's home and its gardens are like a big adventure park for twin sons, Campbell and Lloyd, who are eight years old. But it wasn't always the lush and inviting landscape that greets visitors today. Richard and Belinda found the property, about a half hour drive from Hobart 17 years ago. They described it as a "blank canvas" of empty paddocks overgrown with grasses.

Today the five hectare property is testament to their individual passions. Belinda, a building and interior designer, built the family an idyllic home and Richard, a horticulturalist, has created a garden like no other. The couple say they are "living the dream", a realisation borne of hard work and dedication.

They built their home in 1992 and initially set out to plant up to 40 chestnut trees. But a move to Port Arthur for work meant

they weren't able to nurture the chestnut trees. A few years later, living back at the property, their decision to plant peonies came after a fated chance meeting with Marg Hansen, a peony grower on the Tasman Peninsula. A friendship grew. "Then one day Marg brought around a big bunch of peonies and I just thought they were amazing flowers," Richard says. It wasn't long before the couple placed their first order for peonies. They planted and watered 1100 plants by hand and had 11 different peony varieties. "Now we've got around 40 varieties, with a total of 5500 in the ground, aiming for 10,000," Richard says.

The couple are in the process of converting their property to an organic farm. Richard is mixing his own seaweed and guano fertilisers. They also have a large, national award-winning olive grove named Renaissance Olives, which they monitor tirelessly before harvesting in order to mitigate damage caused by annual frosts. The couple have also planted a quince hedge and are testing 15 varieties of lilacs, to fill a void in the Tasmanian market.

Weston Peonies is a popular stop off for state-wide garden clubs and Richard and Belinda are hoping to open the property for public viewings through organised tours next year. They have also been attending the popular Growers Market in Hobart with great results, often selling out in a matter of hours. For more details about Richard and Belinda and their fantastic farm, phone (03) 6268 0063. ■



Weston  
peonies