

Cultural Details: **Papaver**

The genus *Papaver* contains a diverse collection of perennial and annual Poppies, for use as border plants and cut flowers. All flower over a short period in early Summer.

Variety Selection (please refer to the catalogue for full descriptions)

Perennial Types:

Nudicaule (Iceland poppy): Single, delicate, around 40cm in height. Summer Breeze is the earliest to flower. Solar Fire Orange has big flowers, as does the pastel-coloured Flamenco, and the 2 similar mixtures Artist's Glory and Party Fun. Meadow Pastels is a taller type.

Miyabeanum: Pacino produces large single yellow flowers over compact, tidy, grey-green foliage.

Orientele (Oriental Poppy): Allegro and Pizzicato produce huge glowers on compact plants, Allegro the shorter of the two.

Alpinum (Alpine Poppy): Compact plants producing masses of single flowers, mainly pastel shades.

Annual Types (Papaver rhoeas):

Shirley Double flowers at around 40cm in various colours, double blooms. Angel's choir is a single flowered mixture, and Red Field Poppy is as the name suggests, used for wild flower mixtures. All can be dried after the petals drop off, for use in flower arrangements.

Propagation and Growing-on (annuals)

For production of seed heads, sow thinly into rows one metre apart in April. Otherwise as an ornamental, scatter the seeds directly into the flowering position in April. Poor soil gives the best results.

Propagation and Growing on (perennials)

Sow the very small seeds (around 9,000 per gram) in May, June or July, onto the surface of a free-draining, open, seed sowing compost, which should be thoroughly wetted with a suitable fungicide prior to sowing (to prevent damping-off diseases), and the trays allowed to drain. Cover trays with clear or milky polythene to maintain humidity, until the first seedlings are visible. Germination takes around 7-10 days at 18-20°C. Keep the germinating seedlings moist at all times.

After around 5 weeks, prick out the seedlings into large-celled trays, then after a month or so transfer to the sales container, an 8-10cm pot. Once established, grow on at 12-15 °C, until ready for sale.

Overwintered plants should be kept on the dry side, under protection, such as a well-ventilated polytunnel or glasshouse. Sell as green plants with a colour label, or in flower. Use a moderate strength liquid feed programme whilst the plants are actively growing.

It is possible to treat the Nudicaule varieties as an annual, sowing in January-February for flowering mid Summer.

Pest and Disease

Maintain good air movement through the crop, and water in the morning rather than the evening to keep the foliage dry and lessen attack by Botrytis. Pay good attention to glasshouse hygiene, using only fresh trays, pots, compost, water and clean bench tops to avoid damping-off diseases, and check for the presence of pests such as aphids and whitefly, spraying accordingly. Powdery Mildew can affect poppies – look out for white patches on the foliage and spray accordingly.

Information provided for guidance only, as cultural practices and climatic circumstances vary.