Growing Papaver orientale (Oriental Poppy)

**Latin Name Pronunciation:** pah-pah'-ver

**Oriental Poppies** are one of the most brilliant herbaceous perennials to grace the early summer garden. The flowers appear to be fashioned of crepe paper and can be more than 6” across on stems to 3’ in height. Compact varieties such as 'Peter Pan' and the delicious **Watermelon** are also available. Colors vary from true neon hues to gorgeous pastels. The bristly leaves turn brown in early summer and disappear entirely, reappearing in early fall. Avoid a hole in the garden by placing Oriental Poppies behind large perennials like Baby's Breath (*Gypsophila*), Siberian Iris or herbaceous Peonies, or simply fill in with shallow-rooted annuals like Nicotiana or Cosmos. Oriental Poppies will not grow in the hot, humid summers and clay soils of the South.

**Please Note:** The plants have long, carrot-like roots, and the bareroot Poppies we ship should be planted with 3” of soil over the crown (as indicated on our plant labels). Dig a hole that's deep enough to accommodate the roots, up to 10-12" deep. Shallow planting is often the cause of failure, as is soil that is too wet.

**Light/Watering:** Plants need a full 8 hours of sun to flower well. While they are drought tolerant once established, give them an inch of water a week when in bud or bloom. Do not overwater when plants are dormant.

**Fertilizer/Soil and pH:** Poppies need a well-drained soil close to neutral, so gardeners with acid soil may want to add lime. Soil should have a pH of 6.5 to 7.0 and be well drained, as plants will not tolerate wet soils in winter, which rot the fleshy roots. Apply a slow-release fertilizer in spring, or side-dress with compost or aged manure. When planting bareroot plants, soil should be deeply prepared and the crown covered with 3” of soil.

**Pests/Diseases:** Oriental Poppies are seldom bothered by insects or disease. During extended wet weather buds may blacken and fail to open. Fungicides may be employed to help prevent this problem.

**Companions:** Plant behind large perennials like Siberian Iris, Baby's Breath or herbaceous Peonies to camouflage the hole left behind when Poppies go dormant in summer. Filling in with annuals such as Nicotiana or Cosmos is also effective.

**Reflowering:** Since deadheading does not reward the gardener with repeat bloom, you may choose to leave the flowers on the plant for the interesting seed pods that follow.

**Dividing/Transplanting:** Poppies have deep taproots that may make transplanting a challenge. Division is needed only every 5 years or so and the best time to divide or transplant is in August when plants are dormant.

**End of Season Care:** Leave any new foliage on the plant. When soil has frozen to an inch deep, apply evergreen boughs or pine needles to buffer soil temperature and help prevent the crowns from being heaved out of the soil.
Calendar of Care

**Early Spring:** Check soil pH and adjust to 6.5 to 7.0 if needed. Apply a slow-release fertilizer or side-dress with compost or aged manure.

**Mid-Spring:** Apply a fungicide if extended wet weather has caused plants to become diseased.

**Summer:** Plant annuals to fill in holes left by dormant plants if needed. Do not overwater dormant plants. Divide or transplant Poppies in August when they are dormant.

**Winter Protection:** In the fall leave new foliage alone, and mulch with a loose material like evergreen boughs or pine needles after the soil has frozen to a depth of 1".