

# GROWING POPPIES

*No cottage garden or field margin would be complete without poppies which announce the summer with their cheerful abundant blooms. Low maintenance and fast flowering, they easily reseed for flowers year on year and are a great beginner's flower to save seed from.*

## Seed Sowing

Poppies are annuals that are best directly sown, preferably in the autumn. Just scatter the seeds by hand over your weed free seedbed or use shallow drills. Sow seeds thinly and cover with a thin layer of soil or sand. Grow in well drained, fertile soil in full sun.

## Transplanting

Unless stated on the packet, poppies are best sown directly in the ground. Poppies benefit from some space, so it's good to thin them to 20cm between plants once they are established, but this is not essential.

## Plant Care

Keep the area weed-free and watered during hot spells. You can mulch around the plants to keep in moisture and prevent weeds. Deadhead to prolong flowering.

## Challenges

Generally pest and disease-free, things to look out for are aphids and downy or powdery mildew.

## Harvest

Pick the flowers often to encourage more flowers to form; they should keep flowering well into the autumn. Ideally harvest the flowers in the morning when temperatures are low and plant water content is high. Plants will arrange better if left to sit in water for a few hours after cutting.

It is worth remembering that poppies have a very short vase life of 3-5 days.

Poppy seedheads are highly decorative and make a wonderful addition to a dry flower arrangement. To dry, cut stems and hang upside down in bunches in a cool, dark and well ventilated space.

## Culinary Ideas And Uses

Only the seeds from *Poppy Somniferum* are edible.

## Seed Saving

Poppies will self seed in situ if left to flower and set seed. To harvest the seeds wait until the heads are almost completely dry on the plant and starting to open. Harvest individual heads and shake over a sheet to release and collect the seeds.

Store in a cool dark place; seeds should remain viable for around 3 years.