



FEATURED QUOTE :

"Spring is a true re-constructionist."

~Henry Timrod

Your Garden Deserves Poppies This Summer

It is said in classical mythology that the poppy was created by Somnus, the god of sleep. The Goddess of Agriculture was known as Ceres, and she worked so hard to develop new foods for her people that she became very weary and could not sleep. Somnus created this unique flower, the poppy, with its magical powers to help her sleep and rest so she could continue her work, which was being neglected, to develop new foods like corn. After a good sleep, Ceres became rejuvenated and her neglected corn crop was revived. The Romans believed that she was responsible for all grain crops like wheat, barley and oats that fed both animals and humans. Today, you will see pictures of Ceres wearing a garland around her neck made of corn and poppy flowers.

Poppies are in the flowering plant family known as Papaveraceae, and there are over 100 plus species for your garden and for use in the kitchen. Poppies love the sun and a well-drained garden soil that has been conditioned with lots of organic matter like compost, animal manure, seaweed, or garden coir fibers. Poppies will not survive in a soil that will stay wet--especially during the winter and spring months. The flowers are large and delicate, so be sure to plant them in a sheltered area in your garden that is protected from the wind. Because the stems of the flowers grow tall and the flowers are so delicate, they can be broken by strong winds. Also, the flower petals can dry up and lose their beautiful color with hot summer winds.

Poppies are cherished for their beautiful bowl- or cup-shaped blooms and intricate center, where a pod in the shape of a baby's rattle will develop, filled with seeds. These seeds will shake free of their pod and spread in the garden, making new plants to add additional enjoyment and color. The seed pod can be dried and used in dried flower arrangements, dried wreaths, or as accent flowers in fresh arrangements. The flowers come in bright colors in shades of orange, orange-red, scarlet, hot pink and yellow. Also available are the new pastel colors that come in pale yellow, soft pink, and white.

The foliage develops in a clump and is long and flowing from the center. This foliage has teeth or notches on its margin, and is almost fern-like in appearance. Some varieties have smooth foliage while the Oriental types are covered with tiny hairs, giving them much character. The flower buds form at the base of the clump like a handful of balloons. As the stems grow, the large flower buds droop over as if they were nodding. Slowly, the flower buds straighten up and open to reveal their beauty. The poppy foliage will disappear by midsummer for many species, so be sure to plant with other perennials that can fill in the hole left by the poppy in the garden.

Poppies are best planted in the spring as potted plants, or you can transplant the seedling that developed in your garden from last year. Most varieties do not come true from the seed that they produce and will usually produce orange flowers. If you want the same color, divide the plants in the late summer, as they emerge from dormancy once the new shoots begin to appear. Poppies have long, deep tap roots, so be sure to dig deep into the flower bed to get as much of the roots as possible when moving or dividing the plants. The first winter in the garden, be sure to cover the new plants with pine needles, straw or evergreen boughs to protect them from the winter weather.

You can start poppies from seed directly in the garden in the spring when the soil has warmed up or indoors in individual pots 6 to 8 weeks before setting them out in the garden. Plant 3 to 4 seeds per 4 inch pot that has been filled with a seed starter soil. Keep pots in a warm room with bright light until you're ready to move outside and keep the soil moist but not wet or the roots will rot easily. When you set out plants in the garden add a 2 inch layer of mulch, compost or pine needles around the plants to keep out weeds and hold moisture in the soil during the heat of summer. Water weekly until plants are well established. When you set out your seedlings or established plants be sure to condition the soil first with compost or animal manure and work it deep into the soil before planting. Fertilize with a good organic fertilizer like DR. Earth Flower fertilizer with Pro-Biotic or Espoma Flower-Tone with Bio-tone nutrients and microbes.

The top selling varieties are the Oriental, Iceland, Corn, and Alpine poppies.

Oriental poppies are very hardy and come in a wide range of colors. They produce 2 to 3 foot tall flower stems and flowers 4 to 6 inch wide with dark and colorful centers. The plant does go dormant during the summer but will reemerge in late August. It spreads with runners from the mother plant, making the clump much larger--or you can dig the runners and transplant when they are 3 to 4 inches tall.

These are the showiest of the poppies because of the flowers and the unique foliage they produce. Once established in the garden, they will live for many years without many problems--and are easy to grow and maintain.

Iceland poppies are short-lived perennials in the garden and are often treated as an annual flower, because they flower the first year from seed. They self-seed easily and will spread easily in your garden, if you allow the seed pod to ripen and dry out. The flower stem will grow 1 to 2 feet tall and the flower 3 to 4 inches wide. The foliage is smooth and the plant looks delicate but if you're trying to naturalize an area of your property this is a good plant to use.

Iceland poppies will do best with cool nights and warm days, and are not recommended for Southern states. The flowers come in shade of orange, yellow, and white, with a beautiful soft yellow center.

Alpine poppies are a short-lived perennial, and will not tolerate hot and humid weather. They will self-seed very easily and will do great when used with wild flowers or meadow plantings. The plant does stay shorter, only growing to 6 to 10 inches tall--and the flowers grow 1 1/2 to 2 inches wide.

Alpine poppies must have good drainage or they will not survive from year to year in your plantings. They work well in rock gardens and love a sandy soil if you're able to blend a bit of organic matter before planting seed or plants.

Corn poppies are best known for the red flowers they produce, and the new hybrids that come in single and double petaled flowers. The species series called "Shirley" comes in a wide range of colors and does not have the dark center found in most other poppies. They grow 3 feet tall, with 3 inch wide cup-like flowers on the stem. The plant does reseed easily and does well as a wildflower. The corn poppy is the most famous of all the poppies in the world

During the First World War, soldiers dug trenches in Flanders, Belgium to defend their borders in the middle of the poppy fields. The ground was made barren by the many years of war but when the fighting ended the corn poppies returned and bloomed. It was as if Mother Nature wanted to heal the land of all the killing and bloodshed that happened there. Fields of red flowers now cover the battlefields, a symbol of remembering our soldiers who died during the war. Now you know why you're given a red silk poppy when you make a donation to a military project fund drive: to remember the men and women who died for your freedom. November 11 was the day that the First World War ended; it is celebrated as Veterans Day in the U.S., and as Remembrance Day in Europe and Canada. This spring, plant some poppies in your garden and enjoy the flowers and their history.

Check Your To Do List For A Great Growing Season!

The lawn

The next few weeks will determine the quality of your lawn for the rest of the year, so please spend some time working on it. Begin with a good cleaning: picking up rocks and branches now will help keep the lawn mower blade sharp and prevent disease problems to the lawn later. Start your lawn mower as soon as possible and let it run for a few minutes to make sure no problems developed during the winter. Sharpen the blade so that when you cut the grass, you *cut* it, rather than ripping it with a dull blade with a dull blade. Change the oil. I know people who have never changed the oil in the mower in the past three, four, five years. Clean the oil filter and the underside of the mower for a good start to the New Year. If this is not your thing, have it done now, while the repair shops are still quiet.

Moss is a problem to a lot of you and now is the best time to work on it. If you are using limestone, use the product at the rate of 50 pounds per 1000 sq. ft. If you are using a drop spreader--the rectangular type which allows the product to just fall out--open it all the way, so it just pours out and turns the ground white. Do it right and the moss will have problems growing in your yard. You can also use the new lime substitute from Jonathan Green Lawn and Garden called Mag-I-Cal at the rate of one bag per 5 to 10 thousand square feet. It's less expensive, less weight you have to handle, and best of all it will change the acidity in just 2 or 3 weeks, unlike the limestone that takes up to 6 months to do the same. If the moss is really bad and thick, almost like carpeting, look for Lilly Miller Moss Killer. All you have to do is apply it when the grass is wet and the product will kill all the moss without hurting the lawn.

Crabgrass is best controlled at this time of the year, with a pre-emergence crabgrass control product. If you are using a 4-step program, it will be Step One: crabgrass control plus fertilizer combination. Apply now, as it must be applied while the forsythia flowering shrub is in bloom. Once the yellow flowers begin to fall, the crabgrass seed is beginning to germinate and the product will not work. Also be sure to water it in well to dissolve the powder and change it to a liquid, so it will create a skin on the soil surface to kill the seed. If you plan to plant grass seed this spring and want to control the crabgrass at the same time, be sure to tell the salesperson so they can tell you about a different product just for this purpose. The common crabgrass control products will kill your new seed as well as the crabgrass seed at the same time. You will pay a bit more for this new smart technology, but it is well worth the investment if you want to plant seed this spring. If you want to stay organic, use corn gluten as a fertilizer and crabgrass control product now. Espoma Lawn and Garden or Bradfield Organics have a corn gluten product available at many garden centers that will keep your lawn clean of crabgrass. However, you will not be able to plant seed with corn gluten! Plant your grass seed in the fall but act now to kill the crabgrass seed!

Fertilizer in the spring is very important to the lawn and helps to get it greened up after the long winter. Jonathan Green has an excellent selection of synthetic lawn fertilizers. When applied correctly, you will have a beautiful lawn that is safe for the entire family to enjoy. They have been in business for over 50 years and work hard to develop products that are safe to keep your lawn beautiful, thick and green for you to enjoy. Today some of you want to go organic in the lawn and that is possible. Look for Espoma Lawn and Garden 4-step organic fertilizers at your local garden centers.

Shrubs

It is now time to prune any non-flowering shrubs, such as privet hedges, burning bush, barberry, spread, upright and pyramidal yews, junipers, hemlocks and dwarf evergreens. Prune now to control the size of the plant before the new growth begins, and holes that develop with this pruning will fill in when the new growth develops later. **DO NOT BE SCARED TO PRUNE!** Pruning will keep plants under control so they do not take over the planting area and have to be replaced because of size. Any dead or damaged branches should be removed; this cleaning will help to prevent problems later. You can remove up to 1/3 of the plant without hurting it as long as evergreens still have green foliage on the remaining branches. Fertilize your evergreen shrubs at this time also with Holly-Tone or Dr Earth Evergreen fertilizer. If you are feeding deciduous plants, use Plant-Tone or Dr. Earth shrub fertilizer.

Transplanting of shrubs is best when done this month, as they are still dormant or slow to develop. Moving plants now will cause little setback or stress to the plant. When replanted, the roots will compensate for the loss and plants will quickly adapt. Such plants as beach roses, regular roses, azaleas, rhododendrons and Rose of Sharon do better when moved at this time of the year. Multi stem plants like lilacs, hydrangeas, ornamental grasses, and perennials can be divided easily at this time of the year with great success. If you own a property that has wild pine trees, birches, blueberries and small shade trees growing on it, now is also the best time to relocate them with higher success. If plants have outgrown their planting area, now is also the best time to move them. When planting, be sure to use compost in the new hole so the roots have rich soil to develop a new root system. I also recommend that you use Soil Moist to help hold water around those new roots that will develop. The new technology with the garden is mycorrhizae bacteria, replacing superphosphate fertilizer with better results. Bio-Tone or the new liquid Plant Thrive fertilizers should be used when you transplant new shrubs on your property.

Roses

Prune shrub type plants to 18 inches from the ground as this will control size and stimulate new growth for more flowers. All dead or damaged branches should be removed from the plant now. Your climbing roses will always do better when tied down to a fence or trellis with garden twine or Twistem to prevent wind damage. To help keep the plant flowering, be sure to remove the suckers that may develop below the graft on the stem of the plant. The graft will resemble a fist or swollen area on the plant; any growth below this will produce foliage only, with no flowers. Sucker growth will grow straight up and very fast, stealing the energy from the plant. Climbing roses will flower more if you keep the branches growing horizontal, so tie them in the shape of the letter S for more flowers. Apply mulch around the base of the roses to keep out weeds, hold water around the plant during the summer, and help insulate the roots during the winter months. Feed roses monthly from April to September with a good fertilizer like Dr. Earth Rose and Flower fertilizer with Pro-Biotic. In May, add a systemic insect and disease control product from Bayer Advanced Lawn and Garden to the rose garden.

Vegetables

Check your soil pH to keep plants growing properly. If you see moss growing in the lawn around the garden, that is a good sign that the garden needs some lime. If you are growing root crops and not having great results, it could be clay in the soil; this condition can be corrected with Liquid Gypsum, found at most garden centers or feed and grain stores. If your soil is sandy and requires many waterings during the summer, it may be time to add compost, animal manure, peat moss, or some sort of organic matter to help out. This year make a plan of your garden on paper so you can change the location of your vegetables each year. Crop rotation helps for a more productive garden. If you are planting peas or beans this year, try using seed inoculation, nitrogen-fixing bacteria for a better crop. Your garden center will have this--and it doubles the crop!

I am going to cover half of my garden this year with a new product called "Weed Free Garden Watering Blanket." This black woven landscape fabric with a built-in watering system will water your garden without getting the foliage wet while putting water directly on the roots of the plant. No weeds, no water on leaves means fewer disease problems, water under the fabric means less water needed and if you put it on the garden now, the soil will warm up faster for better growth during the season. Warm soil gives you early and more vegetables--2 to 3 weeks earlier, and it's great for peppers, eggplant, cucumbers, squash and tomatoes in your garden.

Fruit Trees

As soon as the flowers fall from your trees, begin a spraying program to control insects and disease problems. If you want a good crop of fruit, you will have to spray them every 2 weeks or you will have bumps, spots, dents or even worms on the fruit. Look for Organocide organic fruit tree spray to keep your plants clean. If you have a problem with squirrels or birds feeding on the fruit, look for a "molded and ridged" owl at a garden center or feed and grain store. Owls are predators; if you can move your fake owl around the trees weekly, it will keep animals and birds away from your trees. Drive a tomato

stake in the ground and set the owl on it. If you have deer chewing on the branches, put Deer Scram around the drip line of the branches. Start now and train the deer before they get comfortable and move to the vegetable garden. Fruit trees will have bigger fruit and more fruit if fertilized every spring. Use one pound of food per inch of tree trunk and place the food in holes 6 inches deep under the canopy of branches. Espoma Tree-Tone or Dr. Earth Fruit Tree Fertilizer with Pro-Biotic will help improve your crops.

Ground Covers

All ground cover plants will benefit with fertilizer now to encourage new growth and repair damage of brown or discolored foliage caused by the winter weather. Plants like pachysandra may have pale green foliage, but a fertilizer that contains iron will deepen the color in just a few weeks. Look for "Ironite" or Miracid from Scotts to green up all plants. If you have English ivy and there is a lot of dried up foliage, add 1 to 2 inches of peat moss or compost over the entire bed, covering the foliage a little bit. This organic material will stimulate the dormant buds at the base of the brown leaves and develop a new green leaf. Feed with Holly Tone and keep wet. Ground cover with grass developing in it can be cleaned with the new "Over the top 2" spray from Fertilome lawn and Garden. To keep weeds out for the entire year apply Fertilome Weed and Grass Stopper. If you have a slug problem in the bed use the new Organic Sluggo Plus at the first sign of a problem.

Berries

While your strawberry plants are small, cover the bed with straw to keep out weeds, keep berries clean, water less, and control slugs. Two inches of loose straw is best--apply now! Applied now, the new growth and buds can grow through the straw. Feed blueberries with rhododendron fertilizer and aluminum sulfate fertilizer to make the soil more acidic. Add 2 inches of bark mulch, sawdust or rabbit bedding as a covering around each plant. Raspberry beds should be cleaned of old branches as the new growth makes the best fruit. The more shoots that develop around the base of the plant, the more fruit will develop during the year. Spray all fruits with Organocide to prevent insect and disease problems as needed. Feed with Plant thrive or Bio-tone fertilizer now and again in Early June.

Perennials

Clean all beds of old dead foliage and winter build up of leaves and pine needles. Edge the flower beds now and then spread bark mulch or compost to a depth of 2 inches deep. Feed with Flower food like Dr Earth Flower fertilizer with Pro-Biotic. If your lilies are up, pour a quart of Tree and Shrub insecticide mixture around each clump to eliminate the Asiatic Lily Beetle. Use 1 Tablespoon per gallon of water. Spread Weed and Grass Stopper from Fertilome to prevent weeds in the garden for one year. Spread Lime or Mag-I-Cal around lilacs and clematis to sweeten the soil for more growth and flowers.

Walkways, Decks & Patios

Treat your hard surfaces with Wet and Forget to prevent moss and mold build-up. Treat your awnings, umbrellas, and patio furniture as you put it out for summer to eliminate problems. Remember, this organic product will last the entire year and works best when rain is available to help destroy the moss or mold. Fences, walkways, shingles on the house and decks will stay clean. Moss and mold will destroy wood, crack vinyl fencing, rot canvas and eat away the concrete that holds the brick together. One application per year will keep everything clean.

If you have a brick walkway or patio and the soil has settled, add a little stone dust or mason sand to it and sweep into the crack to lock the bricks in place. Wash the sand into the cracks with water from the hose, as this will compact it tightly to keep weeds out and stop the bricks from settling.

Alaska Trip

Paul Parent will be hosting a tour that includes:

Vancouver, BC

- Butchart Gardens--55 acres of floral display!
- Cruising the Inside Passage:
- Ketchikan
- Icy Strait Point
- Juneau
- Skagway
- Hubbard Glacier Cruising
- Seward
- Scenic Drive to Anchorage
- Denali National Park
- Fairbanks City Tour, a tour of the Gold Dredge # 8 and a cruise down the Chena river on the Riverboat Discovery Sternwheeler.

Trivia

This Week's Question

Rosolio is a product made using roses. If someone gave you rosolio, what would you be expected to do with it?

Drink it

Dye cloth with it

Eat it

Polish your shoes with it

Display it

This Week's Prize:

Bio-tone® Starter Plus

All Natural Plant Food Enhanced with Bacteria and Mycorrhizae

- Microbe-enhanced all natural plant food
- Includes both endo and ecto mycorrhizae

- Grows larger root mass to help plants establish fast
- Promotes bigger blooms
- Reduces transplant loss

Last Week's Question:

Which of these continents represent the natural habitat of the cactus?

- A. Asia and Australia
- B. Europe and Africa
- C. Europe and Asia
- D. North America and South America
- E. South America and Africa

Last Week's Winner:

Mary Jane Miller

Last Week's Answer:

D. North America and South America

Last Week's Prize:

Bio-tone® Starter Plus

One winner per question - we choose winners from the list of those who answer correctly. Winners must be newsletter subscribers. We'll ship you your prize, so be sure to put your address in the form in case you win!

Garden Journal

Are you looking for a great gift for a gardener (or yourself)? This garden journal helps make planning and organizing easy. This journal, *autographed personally by Paul*, makes a perfect gift for gardeners. The cover holds a 5x7 or 4x6 photo and a heavy-duty D-ring binder.

Also included:

- 8 tabbed sections
- 5 garden details sections with pockets for seeds, tags...
- Weather records page
- 6 three year journal pages
- Insect & diseases page - 3 project pages
- 3 annual checklist pages

- Plant wish list page
- 2 large pocket pages
- Sheet of garden labels
- 5 garden detail sheets
- 5 graph paper pages for layouts
- 5 photo pages, each holding four 4x6 photos in landscape or portrait format



Featured Recipe: Sloppy Joes

What You'll Need:

- 3/4 pound ground round
- 3/4 cup chopped onion
- 1/2 cup green pepper, chopped
- 2 cups tomato sauce
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon prepared mustard
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- 12 buns or rolls

Directions:

- In a large nonstick skillet over medium heat, cook the ground round, onion and green pepper until beef is browned, stirring to crumble.
- Stir in tomato sauce, tomato paste, mustard, chili powder, Worcestershire sauce, salt, sugar, oregano and pepper; reduce heat to medium-low.
- Cover and cook for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- Spoon 1/4 cup beef mixture over bottom half of buns or rolls, cover with top half.

Yield: 12 servings

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