

POPPIES



- While the red poppy is a symbol of modern times, legend has it that the poppy goes back to the time of the Mogul leader, Genghis Khan, as the flower associated with human sacrifice. In the 12th and 13th centuries, the Mogul Emperor led his warrior hordes on campaigns south to India, and west to envelop Russia as far as the shores of the Black Sea. The policy adopted by the armies of Genghis Khan was simple and effective. They would isolate their enemies, surround and completely annihilate them. The legend states that on the battlefields that were literally drenched with blood, white poppies grew in vast profusion.
- Poppy flower pods grow from a lettuce-like base, atop a single stalk, sometimes over 4 feet tall. The flowers are beautiful and grace areas world-wide. Here in Yuma, the pods are very popular in dried flower arrangements, acreage will be around 500 acres this year.
- Poppy seeds have been found in Egyptian relics dating from 2,500 BC, and the poppy has been a symbol of death and rebirth since these times; it grows in the fields, is cut with the harvest and always returns the following year. The profusion of poppies on the First World War battlefields of Ypres and the Somme struck a chord with all who saw them. The war-churned wasteland of mud, shell holes and broken bodies had been transformed into a dazzling display of wild flowers, healing the land.
- Poppies have been used for centuries in seasonings, medicine and health tonics. Tea from poppies has been used for its calming effect. The Oriental poppy is the only poppy that contains opium, but other poppies do have mildly sedative effects, too. Water made from poppies is said to remove wrinkles and freshen the skin. Poppies can also be used for dye and for adding flavor and texture to breads and pastries.
- No more interesting flower is to be found than the poppy, and a certain kinds are extravagantly beautiful, though short-lived. All poppies, without exception, thrive best when fully exposed to sunshine, and grown on rather dry, sandy soils, easy to find here in Yuma.
- It is a characteristic of poppy plants to make tap-roots: hence, in transplanting them, usually results in a lost season, because the inevitable breaking of the tap-roots prevents flowering. But if the transplanting is done with care during the cool late fall weather, plants will make new tap-roots to replace those that have been broken by transplanting.
- The most useful of the perennial poppies is the great scarlet, or Siberian poppy (*Papaver bracteatum*). This is well known for its neat, compact growth of grayish saw-toothed leaves and its profusion of vivid orange-scarlet flowers in the early days of spring.
- In the production of the potent drug, opium, several species of poppy are employed, none of which are grown in the Yuma area.
- Poppy seed has been cultivated for over 3,000 years. The tiny poppy seed actually comes from the plant that produces opium. The botanical name for the poppy flower means 'sleep bearing.' Although poppies were used in the Wizard of Oz to put Dorothy to sleep, the seed does not have this effect. Poppy seed was used as a condiment as early as the first century A.D. The red poppy flower has been the symbol of fallen warriors throughout history and was adopted as the emblem to commemorate Veterans Day in the United States.
- There are 1 million poppy seeds in a single pound.

- Poppy seeds have a sweet, nutty flavor and are used as flavoring in breads, rolls, and cakes. They are also used to make poppy seed oil, which is used in cooking, artist's colors and soap. Pressed poppy seed cakes are also used for livestock feed.
- November is poppy month, the time of the year when by the wearing of a simple emblem, a red poppy, we salute the memory of those who sacrificed their health, their strength, even their lives, that we might live in a free country.
- Long known as the corn poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*) because it flourishes as a weed in grain fields, the Flanders poppy as it is now usually called, grew profusely in the trenches and craters of the war zone. Artillery shells and shrapnel stirred up the earth and exposed the seeds to the light they needed to germinate.

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