



Trowel Talk!

June, 2015

Open season for poppies

Every time I see an oriental poppy in bloom, it stops me in my tracks. I have to take a moment to marvel again at the huge cup-shaped blossom with its crinkled paper-thin petals that seem saturated with an impossible amount of colour. The petals are satiny smooth, in marked contrast to the coarser pale green foliage which is covered with fine downy hairs. Even the buds are distinctive - completely green and already plump as they emerge from the base of the plant. They get larger and more bristly as the stems grow long enough to hoist them up above the foliage where they can open to the sun.

The most eye-catching cultivars are hot colours – described as glowing orange, fiery scarlet, vermillion, ox-blood red. But there are pastel cultivars too: salmon pink and sparkling white. Most varieties have an ink-black blotch at the base of the petals. Most have single blossoms but there are doubles and others with fringed petals. All have a furry ring of deep purple-black stamens nestled within the blossom. This eventually becomes the seed pod - an urn shaped container with hundreds of tiny black seeds rattling around inside.

Oriental poppies can be up to 1 metre tall with blossoms that would be 25cm in diameter if spread out flat. Each stem holds one dazzling blossom aloft, well above the foliage,



Photo: Kelly Noel

A mass planting of poppies in the author's garden. The many daylilies planted in the same bed do a good job of hiding the fading poppy foliage.

where it catches every breeze and attracts bees and butterflies.

Oriental poppies bloom in early June, sometime before the bearded irises are finished. You must be careful if you place it near other plants that bloom at the same time. The intense colours of the poppy can make nearby pastels look muddy and dull. Choose a new poppy when it has at least one bloom so you can see exactly what colour you are getting and judge better how it interacts with the colours of other plants. I usually choose whites, clear yellows and variegated foliage to compliment these brilliant show-offs.

Oriental poppies are very hardy and long-lived, easy care perennials. They do very well in zone 4 and 5 Ottawa gardens. If they are given a sunny position where the soil is moist but well-drained, they will reward you by clumping up with each passing year, producing more and more blossoms. The clump will not decline if left undisturbed indefinitely but new plants can be propagated by dividing the fleshy fibrous roots. Even a fairly small piece of the root will develop into a new poppy. As with any early blooming plants, the best time to divide is in early fall. The foliage often perks up

again when the cool weather arrives and new divisions get a good start during this period. New plants may be grown from seed also. Interesting new colour variations may be obtained this way.

You can include poppies in a bouquet but they must be cut before the bud opens and immediately put in water. The petals will soon drop off a poppy picked when the blossom is already open.

Several poppies of the same colour massed together in a border look spectacular. But, after all the blossoms have faded the foliage declines during the heat of the summer, so these plants must be grouped with companion plants whose foliage is bushy enough to fill the gaps during the summer months. Daylilies that bloom in July will do this job very nicely. Their foliage is still low when the poppies are blooming so they will not compete for the spotlight at that time. Later, when the poppies are just a memory, the daylilies will take over and dazzle the viewer with their own beauty - but that is another story.

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Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton

Where to find us this month for free gardening advice!

ONGOING:

Telephone Help Line: 613-236-0034

- Wednesday and Thursday 1–3 pm (all year)

E-mail Help Line: mgoc_helpline@yahoo.ca

- monitored daily

- send photos of garden pests, diseases or plants for ID

CLINICS:

Byward Market: Saturdays, May 9-30 (10 am – 2 pm) and June 6-20 (9 am – 12 pm)

Parkdale Market: Saturdays, May 9 – June 20 (9 am – 1 pm)

Carp Market: Saturdays, May 9 through June 27 (9 am – 1 pm)

Ottawa Farmers Market, Lansdowne Park: Sundays, July to Sept, 9am-1pm

Main Farmers Market, Museum of Nature: July 11 & 25, Aug 8, Sept 5, 9am-1pm

Cumberland Market: Saturdays, July 11, Aug 8, Sept 5, 9am-1pm

North Gower Farmers Market, 2403 Roger Stevens Dr, North Gower: June 20, Sept 19, 8:30am-1:00pm

HerbFest, Herb Garden, 3840 Old Almonte Rd, July 26, 9am-5pm

Carp Garlic Festival, Fairgrounds, Carp, Aug 8-9

SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

No talks scheduled at this time! See you in the fall.



For information on arranging a lecture for your group: mgottawaspeakers@gmail.com

For more information on Master Gardeners, visit us at: <http://mgottawa.ca>



June TO DO List

- Watch for pests and disease in the garden. A daily walk around the yard helps to ensure you are on top of potential problems. It can also be a great way to relax.
- Watch the papers or check with your local Horticultural Society or Garden Club to find out if there are any garden tours in your area. Garden tours are a great way to get ideas for your own garden
- If you have a gardening or plant identification question, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).

Tip of the Month

Now that gardening season is in full swing, take the time to look at the view from various points. What do you see from your kitchen window? How about from your deck or patio? What does your yard look like from across the street?

If the answer to any of these questions is “less than satisfying”, now is the time to start planning some changes.

The addition of trees or shrubs can add visual height to the landscape and make the house seem more in scale with its surroundings – sometimes this is referred to as anchoring the house which can add curb appeal and can also increase privacy.

Landscaping can also be used to hide an eyesore. If your kitchen window offers you a clear view of the neighbour’s composter, then the area in front of the property line would be a candidate for a garden bed with tall perennials; but that is only a seasonal solution. A hedge, fence or garden structure would provide a permanent screen. The addition of garden ornaments or vines to a fence will soften the look and add to its viewing appeal.

A vista is a long distance view. Sometimes gardeners or designers



refer to a “borrowed” vista – that is when you can enjoy someone else’s landscape or nature from your vantage point. In you are lucky enough to see a park, golf course, forest or some other natural delight when you sit on your deck, you might want to selectively prune any trees or shrubs to give you a clear line of sight. These borrowed vistas can

may your property seem larger because of the long uninterrupted view.

If a vista is a long-distance scene then a vignette is the close-up. A vignette is a composed scene in the landscape. It is a post-card view of an area of your yard and may tie in with the idea of garden rooms.

With some selective landscaping you can sit back and enjoy the view!

