

2003 is the Year of the Poppy

The National Garden Bureau designated 2003 as the Year of the Poppy. Poppies deserve a place in any garden: in wild-flower and meadow plantings, perennial borders, cutting gardens or mixed-shrub borders. Their flower colors range from deepest crimson, bright orange, yellow, soft pink, peach, rose, lilac and cream. Flowers may be single, double or semi-double, with amazing texture and size.

In a border garden, poppies combine beautifully with lamb's ears, cornflowers, larkspur, Shasta daisy, and veronica. For a meadow look, you cannot go

wrong with a sowing of poppies among coreopsis and bachelor's button. The colors complement each other and the various plants extend the flowering season into fall.

Flowers appear primarily in the spring or fall when cool temperatures prevail. Poppies vary in height from 2 to 3 feet tall, although



Corn Poppy

there are dwarf strains of the Iceland poppy that reach only 12 inches. The latter work well in rock gardens, in containers and at the front edge of a border. Most poppies look good in the middle or towards the rear of perennial beds.

Annuals

Corn poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*), grows 2 to 3 feet tall, blooms from late spring through summer and bears red, purple, lilac, white, salmon, peach, pink or orange flowers with a

distinctive dark blotch at the base of each petal. Shirley poppy, a selection from the species, grows to 4 feet tall; its pastel blooms lack the blotch but have a narrow white or tinted edge on each petal.

Perennials

Alpine poppy (*Papaver alpinum*), grows 5 to 10 inches tall, blooms from late spring to summer and bears white, yellow, or occasionally orange or red flowers. It is hardy in Zones 5 to 8.

Iceland poppy (*Papaver*



Alpine Poppy



Oriental Poppy

nudicaule), grows 1 to 2 feet tall, blooms from late spring through summer and produces orange, red, yellow, apricot, pink, salmon or white flowers up to seven inches across and has attractive blue-green segmented foliage. It is hardy in Zones 2 to 8.

Oriental poppy (*Papaver orientale*), grows 2 to 4 feet tall, blooms from late spring to midsummer and bears scarlet, salmon, pink, peach, white or rose blooms, usually with a black blotch at the base of the petals. The foliage dies back after flowering but begins to regrow in fall. It is hardy in Zones 4 to 9. (MJF)

Garden Guide

Things to do this month

Check on water needs of hanging baskets daily in the summer. Wind and sun dry them more quickly than other containers.

Clean up fallen rose and peony leaves. They can harbor disease and insect pests over the winter if allowed to remain on the ground.

Mound soil over the lateral or brace roots of corn stalks for extra support against strong winds.

Pick summer squash and zucchini every day or two to keep the plants producing.

Remove old vegetable plants which have stopped producing to eliminate a shelter for insects and disease organisms.

Water the garden early in the day so plants can absorb the moisture before the hot sun dries the soil. Early watering also insures the foliage dries before night. Wet foliage at night increases susceptibility to fungus diseases.

Many herbs self-sow if the flowers are not removed. Dill produce seeds that fall around the parent plant and come up as volunteers the following spring.

To reduce the number of pests on your fruit tree for the coming year, pick up and destroy all fallen fruit.

Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) is used by many gardeners to protect cole crops from chewing caterpillars.

White flies are attracted to yellow, so use yellow sticky boards to reduce their populations.

Every weed that produces seed means more trouble next year. Control weeds before they go to seed.

Do not add weeds with mature seed heads to the compost pile. Many weed seeds can remain viable and germinate next year when the compost is used. (MJF)

Controlling Nimblewill

Nimblewill, *Muhlenbergia schreberi*, is a native, warm season, weedy grass that often invades home lawns. It grows best during the warmest summer months. It is objectionable in cool season turfs like Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue because of its delayed green up in the spring and early fall dormancy. Many homeowners also dislike the fine-bladed texture of nimblewill and its habit to lie very flat on the ground, making it difficult to mow. Unfortunately, nimblewill is also a perennial grass that cannot be controlled with a pre-emergent herbicide; its root system survives Nebraska's cold winter temperatures enabling existing plants to regrow each year. It is spread primarily through the seeds that are produced each year in early fall.

Nimblewill is a thin, wiry, pale green grass. The leaf blades are short and emerge at 45 degree angles from the stems, which are slender, smooth and tend to lie flat on the ground. It spreads by short stolons, or above ground stems, that root at the nodes. Nimblewill forms



circular patches as a result of its stoloniferous growth pattern, which grow larger each year.

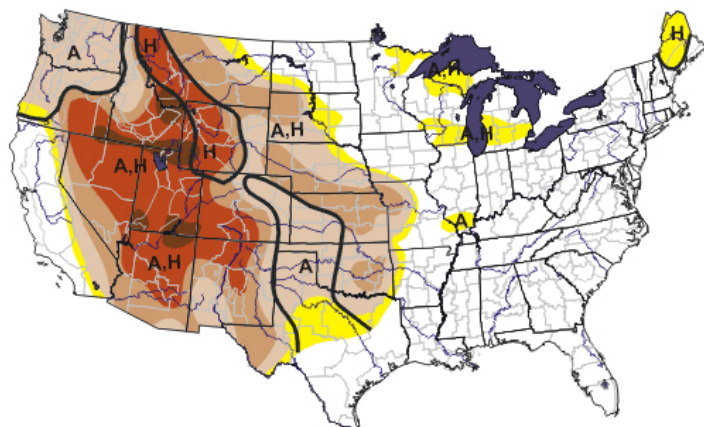
There is no easy method for controlling nimblewill, because there is no herbicide that will kill this weed and not kill the existing turfgrass too. The easiest means of control is to spray patches of nimbleweed with a total-kill herbicide like Round Up. Spray a circle 10 to 12 inches larger on each side

than the existing patch, to ensure all stolons are killed. Allow the grass two to three weeks to die back, then reseed or resod the area.

A common mistake made by homeowners is not killing a large enough area of grass initially, and inadvertently leaving some nimblewill alive. When this happens the patches will regrow and the control process must be repeated. (MJF)

Latest U.S. Drought Monitor Map

As of July 29, Lancaster County is in moderate drought conditions.



For the most recent map, visit www.drought.unl.edu/dm

Source: National Drought Mitigation Center, University of Nebraska

Storing Extra Seeds

Seeds can survive several years when given the proper environment. Although optimum storage life varies among species, most seeds will survive at least two years with some lasting for centuries. Whether they are leftovers from the seed you purchased or seeds you have gathered from your own plants, with a little care and thought, it is a simple task to save seeds for use in next year's garden. Unused seeds that keep

for at least five years are broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, cucumber, kohlrabi, lettuce, pumpkin, radish and squash.

The most important storage factor is low moisture content. Most seeds readily absorb water if stored in a damp environment. In a proper planting environment this would lead to germination and growth. In storage this leads to molding and rotting. Store seeds at a relative humidity of less than 65 percent.

Seed life can be further extended by placing seeds in a sealed container. This reduces the oxygen content and creates a controlled atmosphere. The best containers for seed storage are zip lock plastic bags or glass jars with tight-fitting lids. To avoid identification problems, leave seeds in their original packets or envelopes. Seeds may be stored in any cool, dark, dry place. (MJF)