

SHUBENACADIE CANAL'S PLANT OF THE WEEK

Common Poppy

Papaver rhoeas

The beginning of November marks a time of remembrance for Canadians and there's no better plant to talk about than the Common Poppy. The common poppy can be found growing across much of Asia and Europe and the northern countries of Africa. As for Nova Scotia, the only poppies you'll most likely see will be those growing in home gardens (which can be done with a little TLC). The common poppy blooms to have bright red petals with black centers. Once the petals fall off, the capsule, a large round bulb is left on the stem. To support such a large heavy flower the stem is very ridged and covered in coarse hairs. Poppies are part of the Papaveraceae family and other members can be seen with different coloured petals such as orange, yellow, pink or white. Before becoming a symbol of the soldiers who fought to protect our country, common poppies were an agricultural weed which gave them the names "field poppy" and "corn poppy". During WWI poppies could be found growing around the trenches and in Flanders fields, which inspired the well-known poem by Canadian Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae. Aside from their flowers, humans use poppies for several other applications, such as medical narcotics made from petals and the liquid found inside the capsules, and finally their seeds add flavour and colour to many dishes.



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