

“Favorite Flowers of the Chesapeake Master Gardeners”

***Stylophorum diphyllum* by Brenda Barrett**

Common name: celandine poppy, wood poppy

Family: Papaveraceae

Tiny Flower Bud!



I found this plant while on a plant buying trip in Raleigh, NC a few years ago. I immediately fell in love with the brilliant yellow flower and the buds covered with *fuzzy* protective hairs. This plant has a rhizomatous root system and is one of the earliest to emerge in the spring each year, usually in mid-April. This year it appeared earlier due to our mild winter, but I have been happy to see it is still getting new growth and still blooming.

This plant is native to Eastern North America. It does best in medium to wet, humusy soils in part shade to full shade. The plant will go dormant in summer if the soil dries out. While researching this plant, I was surprised to learn that if you break the stems, there is a bright yellow/orange latex sap. The sap is caustic and can cause welts on your skin, can seriously burn your eyes and was used by the Native American Indians as a dye and as war paint. It originally evolved to prevent predation.

As the flowers fade, they are replaced by an oval, four-chambered seedpod that is, again, covered with the short, protective hairs. In mid-summer, the capsules split open to release the seeds which in turn are moved by ants. The seed coat is covered with elaiosome, which attracts the ants. The ants then take the seed back to their colony as food for their young. Once the elaiosome is eaten, the seed is deposited in a trash chamber outside the colony to prevent bacteria or fungus in their home, where the seed can germinate. The seeds are edible and can serve as a food source for snails, slugs, mice, chipmunks and deer.

The wood poppy does not need to be paired with another plant to stand out, but it could be combined with the Woodland Phlox or Blue Flag Iris.

Zone: 4 – 9

Height: 12” – 18”

Spread: 12” – 18”

Bloom time: April – June

Bloom Description: Yellow

Sun: Part shade to full shade

Water: Medium to wet

Suggested use: Naturalize, Rain Garden

Flower: Showy

Tolerate: Heavy shade, wet soil

Photos by Brenda Barrett

Resources:

Missouri Botanical Garden

Bruce Crawford, Director, Rutgers Gardens

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