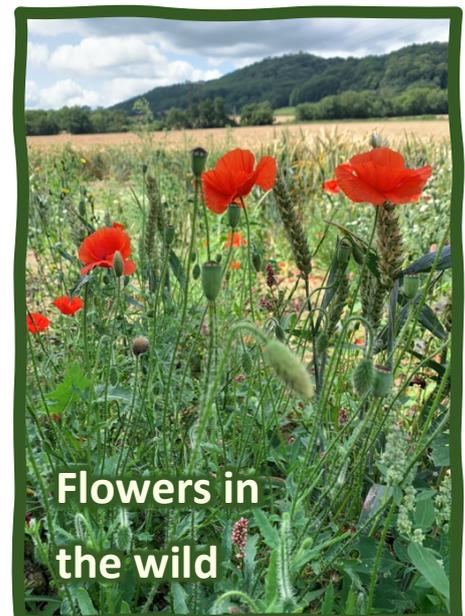
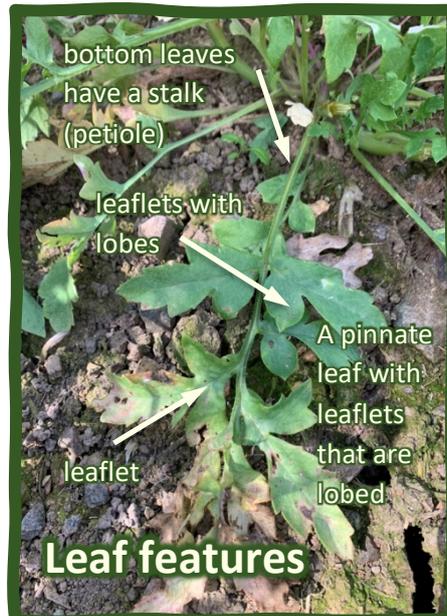


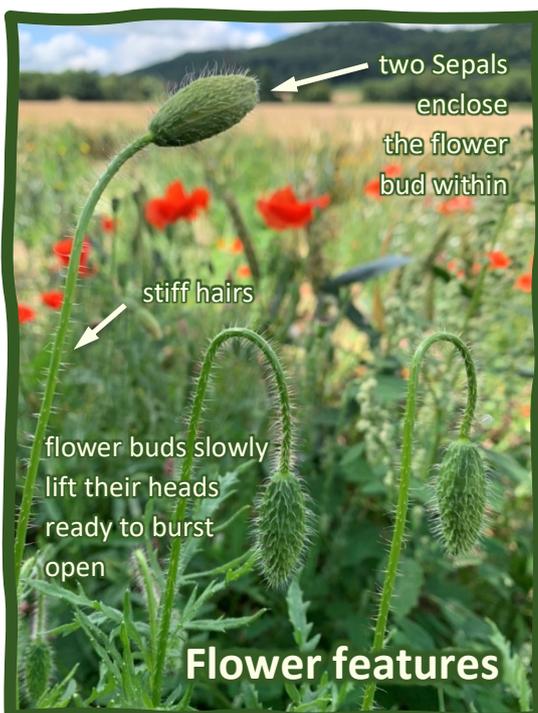
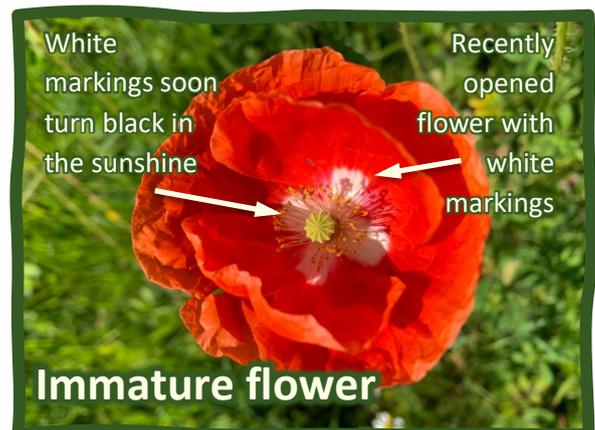
# PLANT ID: common poppy

*Papaver rhoeas* L.

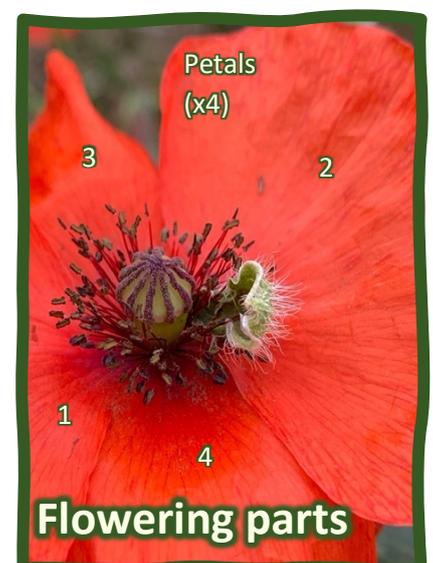


## Practical uses

Its flowers have been used as painkillers for soothing mild aches and pains like toothache and a sore throat; while its fresh petals have been used in preparing a syrup for use in red dyes, lipstick and for reducing facial wrinkles. Recently, science is beginning to think that chemicals within the petals may prevent skin cancer.



Recognised as a symbol of fertility, death and renewal.



# PLANT ID: common poppy *Papaver rhoeas* L.

Early ancient names referred to poppy as 'thunder-cup', thunder-flower, or 'lightnings'. This reflected a belief that if poppies were picked, a thunderstorm would soon arrive bringing summer downpours to damage the crops within which it grew.

It is an international symbol of remembrance, evoked by the human loss on the battle fields of WW1. The incendiary battle-scarred lands were perfect conditions for the awakening of the poppy seeds, which then conjured images of a 'sea of blood' - evoking sorrow and hope in all of us.

Four scarlet red petals that overlap

Often with a black blotch at the base of each petal

Stigma

Stamen

**Flower parts**

As the fruit matures, small apertures will appear beneath the lip of the cap

Stigma rayed liked spokes of a wheel

Conical cap

Petals formerly affixed to the receptacle

**Immature fruit**

Seed capsule

**Poppies are poisonous!**



Obovoid shaped capsule contains seeds

Hairless capsule

Erect stem with long stiff hairs at a right angle to the stem

conical cap with spoke-like radiating ribs

Holes (apertures) allow seeds to fall out when shaken

**Fruit**

Stigma – radiates out like spokes of a wheel

Remains of flowering bud

Anther (pollen bearing)

**Flower parts**

## Helpful ID tips:

The best way to identify the five main red coloured poppies from one another is to:

- Look at the colour of the milky latex;
- The shape of the seed capsule that is visible soon after the petals fall.

## Bread-seed poppy (*P. somniferum*).

Though a different species, this is the poppy that is specially cultivated for its edible seeds which can be used in cakes, breads and seed oil.

## Reproduction strategies:

**Pollination:** pollinated by insects.

**Seed dispersal:** spread by the wind, birds and mammals.

# PLANT ID: common poppy

*Papaver rhoeas* L.

## Fact File:

**CURRENT STATUS:** Least Concern of becoming extinct

**LOCATION:** Exists across Europe, Nth. Africa Asia.

### Plant Description (aka Taxonomy)

It is one of about 70 species (globally) that make up the genus, *Papaver*, which is in the poppy family (*Papaveraceae*). Except from the seed capsule, the whole plant is rough and bristly-hairy. Leaves are deeply lobed. A branched annual herb that grows up to 60cm in height.



**Flowers:** June, July, August, September and sometimes October.

#### Flower Structure

Mostly 7 – 10cm across. Consisting of four showy bright scarlet red petals (sometimes mauve, white or pink – especially close to gardens) often with a black blotch at the base of each petal. Anthers are distinctly bluish black. The petals often fall by the end of the day. Stigma rayed like the spokes of a wheel from its centre.



**Fruits** from July – September.

Mature seeds are contained within an **obovoid** hairless **seed capsule** which has a conical top with spoke-like **ribs** radiating out from its centre beneath which you can find small **apertures** that allow the seeds to fall out when mature.



#### Leaf

Once or twice **pinnately lobed**, cut or toothed and stiffly hairy. The basal leaves are stalked, but the upper leaves are sessile (attached to the stem without a stalk).



#### Habitat

They exist in arable fields, upon waste ground and roadsides often preferring calcareous soils.

## ALIASES

Also known as the corn poppy, corn rose, field poppy, flanders poppy, thundercup, thunderflower, lightnings and red poppy.

## What to look for



Recognisable by both its delicate scarlet red (tissue-paper like) petals in the shape of a saucer, and by the **obovoid capsule** with spoke-like **ribs** radiating out from its centre.

### Best time to see it and use it

- Poppies are ripe for picking when they turn grey-brown and you can see a number of small holes below the rim of the flat top. If you shake the **capsule** the seeds should then fall out easily.
- June, July, August before the corn fields are cut. Being in an arable field with thousands of brightly coloured red poppies is a magical feeling and will inspire you to write poetry and put a smile on your face for the whole day.

### Stem and trunk

Erect stem up to 60cm in height with patent bristles and milky white (sometimes yellow) liquid latex that oozes out when split in two.

## FOOD WEB

Nectar gathered by insects. Oil rich seeds eaten by birds, mammals and humans.

## IMPERSONATORS: Key similar species are:

There are five other red petalled poppies (*Papaver*) that you may encounter:

**Long-headed poppy** *P. dubium* has a 2.5cm hairless seed capsule that is twice as long as wide; while its sub-species **yellow-juiced poppy** *P. dubium ssp lecoqii* is recognised by its yellow anthers and yellow milky latex when its stem is split.

**Prickly poppy** *P. argemone* has separated petals and blue anthers, its seed capsule has long **erect bristles**.

**Rough poppy** *P. hybridum* has a globular seed capsule that is covered in erect stiff bristles.



# PLANT ID: common poppy *Papaver rhoeas* L.

**What's in a name?** *Papaver* is Latin for milk which describes the milky white/yellow latex that ooze from the stem when broken, and *rhoeas*, is ancient Greek for the colour red.

## Botany glossary (part 1)

**Annual** - a plant that completes its full life cycle within one year (germination - flowering/fruitletting - death)

**Bud** a small swelling along a branch or at its end from which new leaves, flowers grow.

**Leaflet** smaller sub-component of a compound leaf.

**Petiole** a stalk of a leaf.

**Pinnate** a compound leaf with more than 3 leaflets arranged in opposite pairs along the main leaf stalk ending in a terminal leaflet.

**Basal Leaves** leaves at the bottom of the plant.

## Botany glossary (part 2)

**Seed Capsule** a dry fruit that opens into more than one part (called a valve), or via holes or a lid that releases the plants seeds.

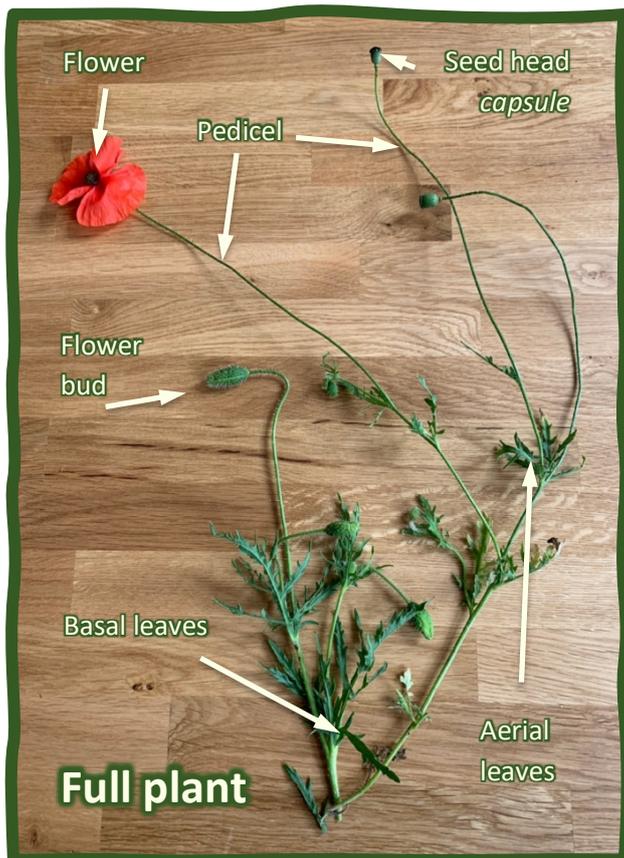
**Anther**- Pollen-bearing part of the Stamen (male) found at its tip.

**Stigma** part of a flower that gets pollen from pollinators such as bees

**Stamen** male part of the flower, each comprising a filament and anther.

**Sepals** the outermost of the two whorls (the inner ones being the petals) that surround the reproductive parts of the flower.

Get up close to the poppy by taking a virtual tour using the Pappus film library.



The five species of red poppy that occur in Britain and Europe arrived into the U.K and Europe as a contaminant of cereal grain carried by the first colonising Neolithic farmers around 7,000 years ago.

Most Poppies are annuals, and typically depend on disturbed soils in order to germinate, which is probably why they once used to flourish in great abundance across arable fields and the battle sites of WW1.

Though they are sensitive to agricultural herbicides their seeds are very long-lived (80yrs) and when herbicide applications have stopped, they soon return in abundance.

## Global species risk of extinction

(IUCN – Red Data List)

Poppy's existence is classed as of 'Least Concern'

[www.GBIF.org](http://www.GBIF.org)



### Global distribution

Exists across Europe, North Africa and temperate Asia

