

Papaveraceae family

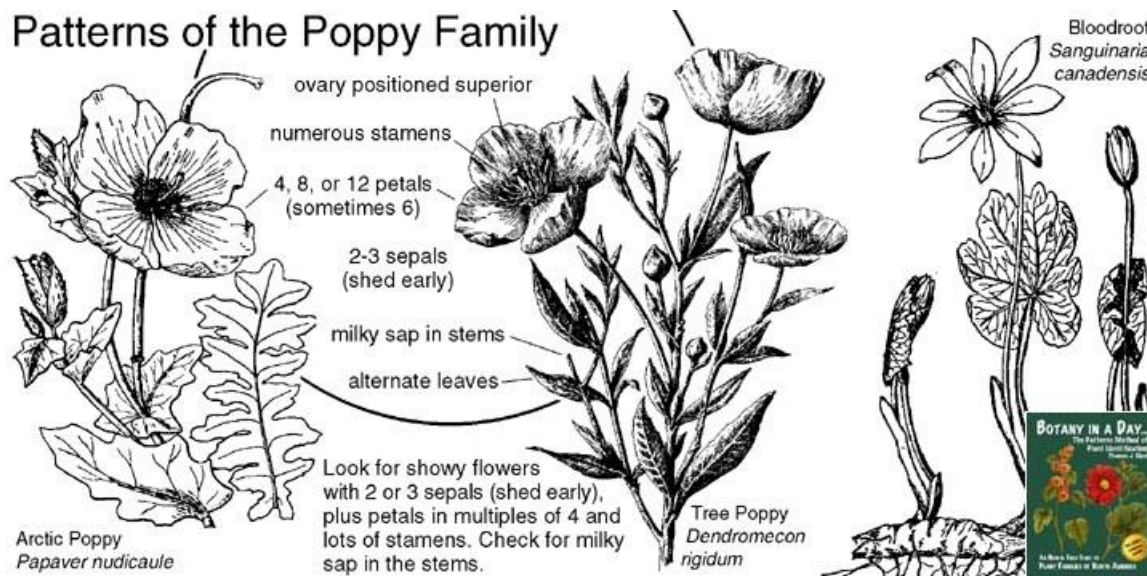
Pronunciation: puh-pav-uh-rey-see-a

Papaveraceae, is the poppy family of flowering plants (Angiosperms) in the Order Ranunculales. The family consists of approximately 44 genera and 760 species. The majority of these are herbaceous annual plants, with a few woody perennial shrubs and a genus of small tropical trees. These plants occur mainly in temperate and subtropical climates (mostly in the northern hemisphere), and are literally unknown in the tropics.

The plants provide outstanding value in the ornamental garden, as well as some varieties being pharmaceutically important. The flowers are odorless and typically bloom very bright colors, lasting for only a few days, prior to going to seed.

There is much diversity in the Papaveraceae family. All species in the family have bisexual, regular, dish-shaped flowers with one superior pistil (female structure) and many stamens (male parts). The buds and flowers are usually large and often nodding. They have two or three many-seeded separate sepals, which fall away as they open and 4 to 12 or more separate, often crinkled petals. The fruit is a spherical or linear capsule. In *Papaver* the seeds are dispersed from holes at the top of the capsule when the plant is shaken by the wind. In some genera the plants are spiny.

Patterns of the Poppy Family



The leaves are usually deeply cut or divided into leaflets, and the sap is milky. They are alternate, sometimes containing hairs, and uphold radial symmetry. The amount and patterns of these leaves vary immensely among the different groups. The stem lacks stipules.

Many of these plants contain alkaloids, which make them poisonous and when consumed by the human body, can cause edema and glaucoma.

The California poppy, *Eschscholzia californica*, is in full bloom from March to May and can be extended with supplemental water. It is native to California and Mexico and is California's official state flower. The showy, 1-3", four flowered petals are only open on sunny days. It is easy to grow, drought tolerant, and reseeds itself for next year. It is a perennial that is typically treated as an annual; the foliage looks best in its first year, and self seeds so easily.

The genus is named after Dr. J.F. Eschscholtz who lived from 1793 to 1831. He performed duties as a surgeon and naturalist with Russian expeditions to the Pacific coast from 1815 to 1818.

