

Two perennials get rave review

By MARGE ALPERN

This year could well be called either "The Year of the Primrose" or "The Year of the Poppy."

Both of these perennials have given such spectacular performances that even the most experienced gardener must humbly realize how very little he or she has to do with gardening success. We are simply the facilitators in a much larger process.

Primroses combine well with tulips and daffodils and are the mainstay of the spring rock or wild garden. They make a splendid underplanting beneath deciduous trees before the leaves come out.

Usually, primroses stop blooming when the weather gets warm. They need the protection from midsummer sun provided by the overhead trees as well as additional watering.

This year's long, cool and wet spring extended the bloom period of the primroses. Planted in light shade and moist, well-drained soil rich in humus, they continue to bloom for several weeks.

They are easily divided following

blooming, or else in the early spring. Leave some of the generous clumps that were so impressive when in full bloom.

THE PRIMROSE FAMILY is large and varied, extending far beyond the Pacific hybrid polyanthus with which we are so familiar. Gold Lace Polyanthus, Barnhaven Sieboldi and Double Primrose are very unusual and more expensive forms. They are, however, highly desirable and easy to grow.

Although these specialties may not make much of a show the first year, don't be disappointed because like many perennials, these fine spring bloomers will reward your patience with beauty and vigor.

Local sources sell these plants for about \$10 a dozen, although they may be sold out for this year. But you can place an order for next year.

The other sensational bloomer of late spring 1980 was the Oriental poppy. This year the blossoms of Oriental poppies opened slowly and continuously to give a flamboyant display and an

endless supply of cut flowers. Because there was not a prolonged heat spell in June, they held their delicate petals, and we were able to enjoy these hardy perennials for several weeks.

As outstanding as Oriental poppies are when in bloom, they aren't attractive plants for the front of the house. After the petals have fallen, the foliage quickly dries and dies back, leaving a sprawling, straggly looking mess.

For that reason, poppies are better when incorporated into a cutting garden to give a brilliant effect. Later, the dying foliage can be readily concealed by perennial baby's breath or young chrysanthemum plants set in around them to bloom in the fall.

GROWN BEST in full sun in well-drained soil, these easily grown perennials will increase their size and the number of blooms each year if left undisturbed.

Unlike more demanding perennials, there is no need to divide poppies often to insure continuous bloom. Should you decide to divide them, wait until late August when plants are dormant.

Poppies have a thick but rather fragile root with few fibers, and it is quite difficult to successfully transplant older plants.

Unfortunately, a severe rain will topple the long-stemmed delicate blooms of Oriental poppies, and they never seem to really recover from the prostrate position. A double-tiered wire basket generally recommended for use around peony bushes effectively holds up poppy clumps.

They also help delphinium, daisies and dahlias to keep upright and compact. Many colors are found in the new poppy cultivars that are more interesting than the familiar bright orange.

The delicate pink with bold black markings is very sophisticated, and there is a watermelon shade, a pure red and a crinkly orange with white edge that blooms a little later.

As a cut flower, there is nothing grown in the northern garden that can compete with the exotic beauty of the Oriental poppy. One can create a striking Oriental flower arrangement with just three blooms and perhaps a few narrow day lily leaves.

Art fair date announced

The sixth annual Art-in-the-Park in Birmingham will be held Sept. 27-28. Hours will be 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. both days.

The event, sponsored by the Friends of Common Ground, will feature the work of 125 artists from around the country.

Work will include prints, sculpture, jewelry, photography, weaving, ceramics, stained and blown glass and soft sculpture.

There will be a children's art area, ethnic food booths and free entertainment from 11 a.m. to closing on both days.

Participating artists are selected by a jury on the basis of quality. Serving

on this year's jury are: Marsha Miro, Detroit Free Press art writer; Aris Koutoulis, painter and teacher at the Center for Creative Studies; and Bob Piepenberg, artist, teacher and sculptor.

The fair, which annually draws some 20,000 visitors, is held in Birmingham's Shain Park, one block south of Maple and two blocks west of Woodward.

Proceeds benefit Common Ground, a 24-hour youth and family crisis center. Services include crisis counseling, legal consultation, medical care, an information and referral network and alternative programs. For information on services, call 645-9676.

Dolls and toys go on exhibit

A Doll and Toy Show will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 10, in Knights of Columbus Hall, 21900 Middlebelt Road, Farmington Hills.

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