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Macleya - Growing Guide

Growing Macleya Microcarpa

Macleya or Plume poppies originate from China and Japan where they are rhizomatous perennials found in meadows and woodland. M. microcarpa ‘Kelways Coral Plume’ is a much sought after herbaceous plant which is perhaps unimpressive in a pot but of exceptional value in the herbaceous border or in wild woodland once established. They can spread quickly and become invasive but that is an attribute rather than a criticism of a plant which, when in full flower, can achieve a height of 6 or 7ft with, perhaps, a 3ft spread.

M. microcarpa has five or seven lobed greyish to olive green leaves which have a white downy indumentum on their undersides. The flower panicles are pendant with pink buds opening to coral pink flowers in June and July.

‘Kelways Coral Pink’ needs reasonably fertile but not necessarily improved soil conditions. It prefers full sun although it will tolerate partial shade where it will flower less profusely. In full growth the plants need wind protection or plant supports in more exposed positions. However, if they are growing at the back of the herbaceous border or in a woodland glade this need not be an issue. Although a fully hardy plant early shoots may occasionally get some frost damage so an autumn mulch may provide protection.

Slugs do find the new leaves attractive but, in a plant of this size, the damage is seldom significant.

M. microcarpa ‘Kelways Coral Plume’ can be grown from seed sown in spring in the greenhouse or cold frame. Clumps can more easily simply be lifted and divided in spring or autumn with a spade. Then the separate rhizomes can be disentangled and planted elsewhere. It may make for even quicker results to insert the root sections or root cuttings into a tray of loam and coax them into action first in the greenhouse before planting

later. When you see the rhizomes you will see why this plant will seldom do well in a small pot!



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Macleya, with Hemerocallis and Veronicastrum

Burncoose Nurseries: Gwennap, Redruth, Cornwall TR16 6BJ
Telephone: +44 (0) 1209 860316 Fax: +44 (0) 1209 860011 Email: info@burncoose.co.uk
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