

Aquilegia - Growing Guide

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Columbine, Granny's bonnet

Aquilegia are common, hardy, reliable, and attractive garden plants to enliven the herbaceous border from late spring to early summer. The common dragonfly or McKena groups of aquilegias appear in a variety of colours and are suitable for naturalising in light woodland in sun or full shade. At Caerhays my father established a number of clumps on banks outside the back yard. Aquilegias were one of his favourite (semi) wild flowers and the clumps were established from seed spread and lightly raked into bare patches of earth in early spring. These sorts of aquilegia are short lived but they have self-seeded themselves for decades to continue to make a good display of very mixed and irregular colours. It is essential that the plants have time to die off and shed their seeds from their long seed pods before grass cutting occurs.

Burncoose offers plants of some of the best known and most popular aquilegia varieties which are usually on display in our Chelsea exhibits. There are pictures of these set out below.

Aquilegia grow best in fertile well drained soil in sun or partial shade. Aquilegia 'Nora Barlow' produces seeds which will generally come true to the original. However most aquilegia are so attractive to bees and insects that they are highly promiscuous and the seed cannot be relied on to come true unless groups of different coloured varieties are isolated on their own a long way apart. Alternatively, you can lift and divide clumps in early spring. Aquilegia dislike interference with their roots systems so this has to be undertaken gently with great care. The divisions may be slow to re-establish and have a year off from flowering as a result.

Especially after flowering, many aquilegias are prone to powdery mildew infections on their lower leaves at dry times when the plants may be a bit

stressed. The affected leaves and stems can be removed. However this normally occurs after flowering as the plant is beginning to die down and go dormant in mid or late summer and is not, therefore, that much to worry about.

Cutting Back Aquilegias After Flowering - Video Tip

View this video on Youtube here <https://www.youtube.com/2W5h1Byyb9U>

Self-seeding Of Aquilegia - Video Tip

View this video on Youtube here https://www.youtube.com/is8MPZ3_DZ0

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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