**Eschscholzia californica**  
[es-SHOLT-zee-uh kal-ih-FOR-nik-uh]

**Family:** Papaveraceae

**Names:** Copa de oro

**Description:** a perennial with spreading stems, growing up to 2 feet tall. The leaves are divided many times into fine greenish-gray segments. Conspicuous flowers (February-September) range in color from a brilliant yellow to a deep orange and have four petals and many stamens. They always close at night, opening again in the morning with a blaze of colors

**Culture:** Prefers well-drained to poor soil in full sun. Seeds should be broadcast in the fall or early spring in well-drained sandy soil that has been well spaded or raked. They prefer full sun. Since California poppies don’t transplant very well, it’s best to plant them where you want them to be long-term. After planting, the soil should be kept moist until the seeds have germinated. This species does well in all zones, and although it is considered a perennial, it is grown as an annual in colder zones. Whole plants are cut when flowering and dried in the shade for use in infusions and tinctures.

**History:** The poppy is California’s state flower. At one time orange and yellow poppy blossoms covered the mountains of coastal California. The Spanish explorers were so impressed that they named the region the Land of Fire. The local Indians used the plant as a painkiller, especially for toothache; as a remedy for insomnia and headache; and as a poultice for sores and ulcers. Indian women employed it to charm unresponsive lovers, though this was considered a crime and, if detected, would result in the woman’s expulsion from the tribe. *Dormidera*, the drowsy one, is the name Californians of Spanish heritage give this flower that worships the sun, closing up tightly at night.

**Constituents:** alkaloids (including protopine, cryptopine and chelidonine) and flavone glycosides.

**Properties:** sedative, hypnotic, anti-spasmodic, anodyne

**Energetics:** bitter, cool

**Meridians/organs affected:** liver, heart

**Medicinal Uses:** West Coast Indians used the California poppy chiefly as a pain reliever for toothache. The plant was also prescribed as a sedative for headache and insomnia, and it is still mentioned today as a gentle sedative and analgesic. California poppy is not a narcotic like its relative the opium poppy. It tends to normalize psychological function. It’s gently antispasmodic, sedative, and analgesic effects make it a valuable herbal medicine for treating
physical and psychological problems in children. It may also prove beneficial in attempts to overcome bedwetting, difficulty in sleeping, and nervous tension and anxiety. May be useful in the treatment of gall-bladder colic.

Dosage:
Infusion: pour a cup of boiling water onto 1-2 tsp of the dried herb and leave to infuse for 10 minutes. A cup should be drunk at night to promote restful sleep
Tincture: 1-4ml of the tincture at night.

Flower Essence: For those seeking outside oneself for false forms of light or higher consciousness, especially through escapism or addiction. California Poppy stabilizes the golden light of the heart, encouraging more self-responsibility and quiet inner development. In this way the soul finds the true treasure it seeks—the radiant sun force of the awakened human heart.

Cosmetic Uses: Today some Californians of Spanish heritage cook the plant in olive oil to make a hair tonic that, they say, makes the hair grow thick and shiny.

Culinary Uses: It has been reported that the leaves of this species were used as greens by Indians either boiled or roasted on hot stones. They are extremely bitter.

References: