

Impatiens

Few annuals that grow in shade provide the range and intensity of color of impatiens. Impatiens are the most popular bedding plants in the United States because of their beauty and ease of growth.



Impatiens flower.
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Height/Spread

Impatiens used to be rather tall leggy annuals, but newer varieties are compact, 6 to 18 inches tall and 10 to 24 inches across.

Growth Rate

Impatiens are tender annuals throughout South Carolina.

Ornamental Features

The wide range of flower colors includes red, orange, salmon, rose, pink, white, violet, and lavender blue. New Guinea Impatiens also offer exciting variations in leaf color.

Landscape Use

Impatiens are used for edging shady beds, massing under trees, window boxes and hanging baskets.

Impatiens thrive in filtered or partial shade and must have protection from hot afternoon sun to maintain their colors. The soft, fleshy stems wilt quickly when in need of water. Plants grown in the soil under trees will need extra water and fertilizer since they are competing with the tree roots.

All types do best in a rich, moist soil mulched to maintain adequate moisture. Feed monthly with a water-soluble fertilizer

Impatiens are an easy-care annual that develop a beautiful shape without pinching or pruning and do not require flower removal to be covered with fresh blooms.

Impatiens seed should be started indoors six to 10 weeks prior to planting outside. After the last chance of frost, harden off your impatiens, and then set the plants in the garden. A quicker way to get impatiens is to purchase transplants from a local nursery or garden center. Space tall-growing varieties 18 inches apart and compact varieties 8 to 10 inches apart. The closer they are planted, the taller and leggier the plants grow.

Impatiens may be grown in containers. Use a soil-less growing mix for good drainage. Impatiens grown in containers need more frequent watering and possibly more fertilizing than those grown in the garden.

Problems

Generally impatiens are trouble-free in the home landscape. Diseases can include damping-off during germination, fungal blights and rots, and viruses. Spider mites, thrips, mealybugs and aphids may infest New Guinea impatiens.

Cultural control methods can easily prevent most problems from developing. Grow plants under optimum conditions to keep them healthy.

Impatiens are highly susceptible to moisture stress. If the plants are allowed to wilt, they will drop leaves and flowers. Keep them well-watered, but not soggy, at all times.

Species & Cultivars

Impatiens: Impatiens - also known as Sultana, Touch-me-not, and Busy Lizzie (*Impatiens wallerana*) - is the best known species, with its mounding habit, long bloom and incredible range of colors. The common name Touch-me-not was given because the slightest touch will cause the ripe, full seedpods to burst open scatter their seeds into the wind. Impatiens often reseed in the garden, but the seedlings will gradually return to producing tall plants with a mix of colors unlike those originally planted.



Mass of white impatiens.
Karen Russ, ©2008 HGIC, Clemson Extension

Impatiens range from 8 inches to 2 feet tall. Many cultivars will be taller than descriptions in catalogs in hot southern summers. Heat-tolerant cultivars will remain more compact. Flowers are from 1 to 2 inches across. Taller plants produce larger flowers. Flowers can be single, semi-double, or fully double blooms that look like miniature roses. In addition to

the many brilliant solid colors, impatiens are available with markings in star, picotee and mosaic patterns.

Impatiens cultivars are usually sold as part of a series with similar growth characteristics and a wide range of color.

- 'Accent' series are dwarf, large-flowering and have outstanding summer-long flowering in shade.
- 'Blitz' series has very large 2½ inch blooms on uniform compact plants. They are drought- and heat-tolerant.
- 'Carousel' has the largest percentage of double blooms of any double impatiens. The compact, well-branched plants flower freely.
- 'Dazzler' series grows 8 to 10 inches tall and is best in shade. Compact plants have large blooms and enormous flower production. Ideal for containers.
- 'Impact' series are extra early with a dwarf compact plant habit. Being extremely heat-resistant, they will flower almost continuously through the entire season.
- 'Impulse' is a compact series that does well in heat. They grow to 12 inches tall.
- 'Super Elfins' grow 8 to 10 inches tall and are a very popular series. They are known for abundant bloom and compact habit even in heat.

New Guineas: New Guinea Impatiens (*Impatiens hawkeri*) have leaves that are large and brightly colored bronze or purple with yellow or pink midribs. They have larger showy flowers in various colors and are usually grown from cuttings.



Pink flowered New Guinea impatiens.
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New Guineas are often promoted for growing in full sun. Unfortunately, they need so much water to do well in full sun that few gardeners can keep up. New Guineas grow best where they will receive morning sun and afternoon shade. An eastern exposure is ideal. Gardeners who can water the plants *very frequently* may want to try them in full sun.

- 'Celebration Candy Pink' is a light pink bicolored variety with dark green foliage.
- 'Celebration Light Lavender' is a lavender variety with green variegated foliage.
- 'Nebulus' is an excellent selection with salmon-flowers and green foliage.
- 'Equinox' is a good selection for light pink flowers. It has bronze, nonvariegated foliage.
- 'Sunglow' has salmon-orange bicolored flowers and dark green variegated foliage.

- 'Tango' can be grown from seed. It has extra large orange flowers that are set against handsome foliage on 15-inch plants.

Look forward to new colors, forms and sizes of impatiens in the future. Hybridizers and seed houses are introducing new species and cultivars rapidly.

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