



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Impatiens balsamina*¹

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Introduction

Balsam produces flowers of various colors in the leaf axils on plants from six inches to two feet tall (Fig. 1).

General Information

Scientific name: *Impatiens balsamina*

Pronunciation: im-PAY-shenz bal-SAM-min-uh

Common name(s): Balsam, Touch-Me-Not

Family: *Balsaminaceae*

Plant type: annual

USDA hardiness zones: all zones (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 7: Jun; Jul

Planting month for zone 8: May; Jun; Jul

Planting month for zone 9: Apr; May; Jun; Jul; Aug

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: Mar; Apr; May; Jun; Jul; Aug; Sep

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: mass planting; container or above-ground planter; border

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant



Figure 1. Balsam.

Description

Height: 1 to 2.5 feet

Spread: .5 to 1.5 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: fast

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: lanceolate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: not applicable

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: not applicable
Fall characteristic: not applicable

Flower

Flower color: white; pink; salmon; purple; lavender
Flower characteristic: showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: no fruit
Fruit length: no fruit
Fruit cover: no fruit
Fruit color: not applicable
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable
Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: very thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; acidic; loam
Drought tolerance:
Soil salt tolerances: unknown
Plant spacing: 12 to 18 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable
Winter interest: not applicable
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

Use and Management

Balsam grows best in full sun to shade on well-drained but moist soils, and should be spaced 12 to 14 inches apart. Plants will need a mostly shaded area in USDA hardiness zones 8 and 9 during the summer. Balsam grows poorly in USDA hardiness zones 10 and 11 during the summer unless placed in total shade. In USDA hardiness zones 9b, 10, and 11, *Impatiens* is generally planted in the fall for winter and spring color.

Balsams develop good root systems and transplant well, but may wilt for a day or two after transplanting. Even large plants can be successfully moved if they are watered frequently after being relocated.

The seed can be sown directly into the garden. Germination takes 8 to 14 days at 70-degrees F.

Pests and Diseases

Aphids suck plants juices causing distorted growth. Spotted cucumber beetle feeds on the blossoms. Tarnished plant bug feeds on the new shoots causing them to turn black. Leaf spots are an infrequent problem. Infected leaves can be picked off.