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How to Grow Impatiens: The Complete Impatiens Flower Guide



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Planting, Growing, and Caring for Impatiens

By [Andy Wilcox](#)

Last Updated: April 15, 2024



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Impatiens are one of the rare annual plants that will provide colorful blooms in shady gardens—so they're also perfect for hanging baskets or containers on porches. Learn how to plant, grow, and care for impatiens.

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Impatiens are very popular as both a bedding and hanging plant. Also called “Busy Lizzies,” these beauties are low-maintenance and don’t even need pinching! The genus name, *Impatiens*, is a Latin word describing how its seeds shoot out of its pods when ripe (the slightest touch can make a ripe impatiens seed pod burst open and scatter its contents).

Ornamental impatiens are primarily from two groups, *Impatiens walleriana* and New Guinea impatiens, *Impatiens hawkeri*. The two look different, but growing them is pretty much the same. *I. wallerina* cultivars are less tolerant of sunshine than the New Guinea hybrids, and the latter has larger foliage.

Of short to medium height, most impatiens varieties grow 8 to 15 inches tall, although some types reach 30 inches. They are perennials in frost-free areas but are grown as annuals or houseplants everywhere else.

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Use impatiens for a splash of all-season color in any area that receives partial shade. Because of their shallow root system and low height, impatiens are ideally suited to containers like hanging baskets, window boxes, or deck railing planters. They also work well in the “filler” role in larger containers.



Orange impatiens in a hanging basket. Credit: Yui Yuize

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PLANTING

Impatiens are usually purchased from a nursery or as liners (small starter plants) from an online vendor. Most impatiens thrive in filtered or partial shade.

Protection from the hot afternoon sun will help to maintain their colors. Some newer varieties grow well in sunny areas.

Where to Plant Impatiens

- Impatiens prefer humus-rich, moist, and well-drained soil.
- Choose a location with some shelter from the wind.
- Soil pH should be slightly acidic, in the 6.0-6.5 range, but they are not picky. Unless your soil is far from that zone, you won't need to amend it to change the pH.
- The closer impatiens plants are, the

where between 6 and 30 inches tall).

For flower beds, space plants 8 to 12 inches apart to keep them bushy and low to the ground.

- Mix in compost or a slow-release fertilizer before transplanting.

When to Plant Impatiens

Transplant impatiens well after the last spring frost, when night temperatures have stabilized above 40F. Impatiens started from seed will need to be sown indoors about 12 weeks before your last frost date, so plan ahead.

How to Plant Impatiens

To transplant impatiens:

- Harden off impatiens purchased from a greenhouse or nursery.
- Work compost or well-rotted manure into the soil.
- Make a hole slightly larger than the pot or container.
- Remove the young impatiens, loosen-

- Tuck in your impatiens, firming the soil around it to prevent air pockets.
- Water in well, and mulch.

To start impatiens from seed:

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- Prepare a tray or several pots with pre-moistened seed starting mix and compost.
- Apply a light layer of vermiculite over the top of the soil mix.
- Sow seeds directly on the surface of the vermiculite and tap or press lightly to ensure contact. Do not cover with soil.
- Mist seeds with water.

moisture in.

- Place in a brightly lit area.

Seeds should germinate in 14 to 20 days.

Remove the plastic when the second set of leaves appears. When seedlings are one inch tall, transplant them into individual pots or cells and grow out. Remember to harden them off before planting outdoors.

GROWING

Impatiens are not fussy and, if planted in the correct location, will thrive with little effort—one of the reasons they are popular.

- The most important thing to remember about impatiens is to water them regularly. Keep the soil moist but not too wet. If the plants dry out, they will lose their leaves. If you over-water the plants, it encourages fungal diseases.
- Container-grown impatiens will benefit from fertilizer applied every two

and encourage more blooms.



New guinea impatiens flowers.

Credit: Amam ka/SS

Overwintering Impatiens

Impatiens are hardy in zones 10-12, but even a light frost will kill them. If you have a favorite color you'd like to overwinter, either take cuttings or dig up the plant and bring it inside. Depending on your available sunlight and day length, a grow light may be necessary.

Propagating Impatiens

Impatiens can be easily propagated from stem cuttings—a great way to get more of a favorite color or gift it to a friend. At the end of the growing season, taking cuttings and growing them over the winter may be easier than digging up entire

- Inspect your plant to make sure it is pest-free.
- Sanitize your shears with alcohol.
- Choose several strong stems and snip them 4-6 inches below the bloom.
- Remove the flower and all but the upper one or two pairs of leaves.
- Place the cuttings in a clear glass container filled with clean water. If your water is treated by your municipality, let the water sit on the counter for 24 hours first to allow most of the chemicals to dissipate.
- In a week or two, when fine white roots appear, transition the cuttings to the soil in one of two ways:
 - Plant them in individual pots filled with moist potting mix.
 - Add a bit of potting mix to your glass container daily until it is completely filled with soil after a week.
After filling the jar with soil, remove the plants and repot.

Types

- Lollipop series (*I. walleriana*) 'Fruit'

colors.

- Tom Thumb Series (*I. balsamina*) is a dwarf variety with large, double, brightly colored flowers.
- Beacon® impatiens are highly resistant to downy mildew and will keep blooming reliably until frost.
- Swirl Series (*I. walleriana*) has pretty pink and orange flowers with petals in red.

GARDENING PRODUCTS



- Spider mites
- Impatiens Downy Mildew (IDM)
- Flower thrips
- Whiteflies
- Aphids

WIT AND WISDOM

- Deer often find impatiens to be quite tasty. Consider the prevalence of four-legged garden pests when deciding where to plant these flowers.
- Rose balsam (*Impatiens balsamina*) makes football-shaped pods that burst when touched, which is why their common name is touch-me-not.

FLOWERS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Andy Wilcox is a flower farmer and master gardener with a passion for soil health, small producers, forestry, and horticulture.

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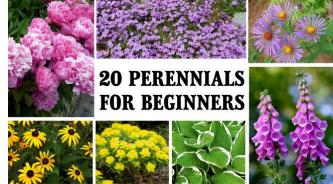
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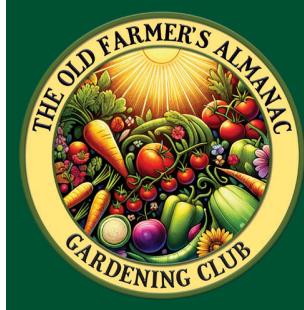
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COMMENTS

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Shilu (not verified) 1 year 9 months ago

My Impatiens that i bought from nursery 10 days ago is not thriving. I repotted in nursery itself but now all the branches have drooped.

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[REPLY](#)

Violet linehan (not verified) 3 years 1 month

ago

I have a double impatiens plant , is it an inside or outside plant? How do I look after it as I'm new to growing flowers.

[REPLY](#)**Philip Dennett (not verified)** 1 year

9 months ago

Strong winds and rain made my plant wilt and look sick. I put it indoors on a window ledge and it thrives. Might help.

[REPLY](#)**The Editors** 3 years 1 month ago

Hi Violet, Thanks for your question.
Your double impatiens can be either a house plant or grown outdoors. They

out the growing season, but are also well suited for containers and hanging baskets. Since impatiens are a tropical plant, they are very sensitive to cold and should not be put outdoors or planted until there is no threat of frost.

Impatiens need rich, moist, and well-drained soil and do best in partial shade. They need regular water, so keep them moist, but not too wet. Impatiens grown in containers or hanging baskets will need more water.

REPLY

Jim (not verified) 3 years 5 months ago

I live I Hawaii my impatient plant is about four years old and it tend to droop I water it but that only helps a little do impatients get all and die after a period of time

REPLY

The Editors 3 years 5 months ago

Aloha, Jim,

You've done well to keep an impatiens plant for several years; they are generally grown as annuals but of course you have ideal conditions. Watering impatiens anywhere—too much or too little—can be tricky. Your plants might be getting too much water; that could cause them to be saturated and droop. If they are drooping in the midday, when the temp is the warmest in hot sun, they may be drooping in response but might perk up later in the day if you leave them alone. Then again it might be time to start or purchase some new ones. We hope this helps!

REPLY

Adrienne (not verified) 3 years 11 months ago

I see HUGE mounds of impatiens all over. They

that? Just planting them ground level doesn't have the same effect. Thanks much

REPLY

Helen L. Crism... (not verified) 4 years 1

month ago

My family has had a variegated leaf impatiens since 1960 and have taken many cuttings to continue propagation. My mom dies in 2012 and I have had her last plant which I am sad to say is dying. I have taken cuttings and placed in water, but they do not seem to look well. The unusual thing this time was that at the end of one of the stalks it became mushy. Last year one of the plants stalks at the base became mushy and try as we might, we never got an offshoot to root. . I am trying to root some cuttings, but they look very droopy. I had been watering the plant and giving it all in one Rose and Flower Care by BioAdvanced weekly (diluted) as this was advised by a gardener. It has been doing well up until this past week. i am heartbroken as I have never seen another variegated leaf impatients. My mother called it Lady

That would help this plant to live and root?

Thank you.

REPLY

Janet Mongillo (not verified) 4 years 8

months ago

My impatiens in a pot has lots of buds, but they
don't open. The ones that do open just hang
limp. What's wrong? Thanks.

REPLY

The Editors 4 years 8 months ago

Try moving it to a slightly brighter
spot or adjusting your watering. Lack
of light can produce subpar blooms,
as can over- or underwatering. Look
for other signs that the plant could be
struggling, such as drooping, yellow-
ing leaves or brown leaf tips.

REPLY

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