

Impatiens

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Impatiens flower in all colors (except true blue and yellow). Their tidy and mounding habit makes them ideal low-maintenance plants. Impatiens were stowaways on trading ships from Africa and naturalized in Central and South America.

Breeders have developed compact, self-branching plants whose flowers are borne above the foliage. Flowers are white, pink, rose, orange, scarlet, burgundy, violet, and many variants. Other varieties have star-shaped patterns of white against colored backgrounds. Double varieties are also grown. Foliage is deep, glossy green or bronze in color. Most varieties grow 12 to 15 inches high in dappled shade.

LIGHT:

Happy in the shade. Impatiens have earned their enormous popularity not only for their long-lasting displays of showy blooms but also for their ability to thrive with little sun. Plant beneath a shade tree or in borders or containers that receive partial to full shade.

WATER AND SOIL:

Impatiens require little special care other than rich, well-drained soil and plenty of water. Quench their hot weather thirst often with deep waterings. Caution: Don't over water....soil should dry some between waterings.

FERTILIZER:

Bloom booster 10-50-10 every other watering, or use a granular garden food like 5-10-10. Apply when planting and again every 6 to 8 weeks.

PROPAGATION:

To propagate tropical or hybrid impatiens, cut a stem just below, not between, a node; (cuttings taken between nodes can rot). Then remove to lower leaves and root the stem in water; place in bright direct light. Pick a North or Eastern exposure that receives about 1 or 2 hours of direct sun. Transplant carefully, the roots will be fragile.

COMMENTS:

For compact but well branched plants that disappear under their flowers, pinch out the growing tips of your impatiens - even the squat varieties - before you plant them. To avoid having too few flowers at first, nip one out of every two plants, then the other 2 weeks later. Use the tips for cuttings to propagate new plants; they can be rooted quickly and used to fill out your groupings in a few weeks.