

TOM'S GARDEN

BLOG

MAY 2022

Balsam Flower (*impatiens balsamina*)

Balsam flower is also known as touch-me-not, rose balsam, garden balsam or jumping Betty. Balsam is very easy to grow from seed and self-seeds year after year. The seeds will “pop,” as all *impatiens* do. It is an annual plant that originated in Southeast Asia. Balsam is happy in part-sun to shade. Double forms are most common in colors of white, red, salmon, lilac, rose and pink. The blossom looks somewhat like a rose blossom but smaller.



These plants attract pollinators and come back year after year with long-lasting blooms to attract butterflies, therefore making them perfect for a butterfly garden. Balsam flowers also attract sphinx moths (or hawk moths) which hover and sip nectar from the blooms.

Balsam is also a herbal remedy. Herbalists use crushed flowers in poultice form to relieve burns, scalds, warts, torn toenails, and skin inflammation.

Balsam will thrive in shady areas and moist woodland soil and summer heat waves. Use a light application of fertilizer during the growing season to avoid rapid leafy growth.

Vines for arches, pergolas and gazebos.

There are many choices when it comes to choosing flowering plants to cover structures. Clematis, roses, and wisteria are very popular choices and care-free once established.

It's a good idea to plant a vine on each side of these structures so they will meet at the top and completely cover. It is also a faster way of creating the look you want.

There are a lot of honeysuckle varieties available by mail order and at local nurseries. Some are native and some are not and can be invasive. A lot of the non-natives are listed as invasive in our area.

Native honeysuckles

(*Lonicera sempervirens*) don't have as much fragrance but are better for bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. Natives are also resistant to some of the diseases like powdery mildew.

These twining vines grow quickly but can be pruned to keep them under control. They will cover a structure in a couple of years. Honeysuckles like full sun to part shade.

Some varieties to look for are:

**L. sempervirens* 'Major Wheeler' red flowers spring to fall with red berries
Zone 4-11

**L. sempervirens* 'John Clayton' Yellow flowers, Zone 4-11

**L. sempervirens* 'Blanche Sandman' Coral red flowers Zone 4-9

**L. sempervirens* 'Cedar Lane' 4 inch long flowers bloom heavily in spring & may repeat in summer Zone 4-9

The list of vining plants is endless.

Some that I have tried with great success:

*Cypress Vine (*Ipomoea quamoclit*)

This vine comes in red or white, has star-shaped flowers and fine ferny foliage. It will race up a tall pole with vigorous growth and bloom all summer till fall. Mature size: 6-15 feet, likes full sun, well-drained soil.

Butterflies and hummingbirds love it.

*Cardinal Climber (*Ipomoea multifida*)

Brilliant red star-shaped flowers attract hummingbirds. It twines and climbs trellises with ease and likes the summer heat. Can be grown in a large container.

Full sun, 8-15 feet.

*Cup & Saucer Vine (*Cobaea scandens*)

Provide a trellis or stakes for young vines.

The tendrils will cling to any rough surface or drape over fences. Annual, Zone 9-10, and full sun. 10-20 feet and blooms summer to fall.

*Love-in-a-puff (*Cardiospermum halicacabum*)

Tendrils grasp trellises and climb quickly.

Light green seed pods hold 3 seeds marked with a perfect white heart. Full sun to part shade. 10-12 feet and trailing.

*Black-eyed Susan Vine (*Thunbergia alata*)

This vine comes in different colors, it twines up trellises and spills over baskets with flowers and foliage all summer.

Full sun to part shade, Zone 9-10.

3-6 feet

These are more trailing than vining:

*Silene (*Silene pendula*)

A cascade of tiny rose flowers with intense color. Early flowering, blooms spring to summer, full sun to part shade. Hardy annual. Light frost ok. 6-12 inches.

Starting Plants From Seed

Starting seeds either early indoors or directly in the soil is a good way to have varieties of flowers and vegetables that are not usually available at garden centers. It is also an economical way to get lots of plants. We are at the mercy of what others think we should grow and what is popular each year. Some people save seeds from year to year to continue growing their favorites. Most seeds will be viable for a few years. Some seeds such as zinnia are best planted in the soil where they will grow. Many vegetables such as beans, cucumbers and sweet corn are planted in the garden when temperature and soil conditions are right. Some seedlings benefit from pinching or cutting back the top stems to promote bushier growth and more blooms. Use a pair of scissors, a sharp knife, or just "pinch" off the stem or first flower bud just above a set of leaves.



Marigolds. Pinch first flower. Yes, it's heartbreaking but just do it! You will be glad later. More flowers will develop, and the plant will be bushier.

New stems will form and grow more leaves and buds making bushier growth.

Definition of Pinching:

Pinching plants is a form of pruning that encourages branching. When you pinch a plant, you are removing the main stem, forcing the plant to grow 2 stems from the same leaf node. You are causing the plant to grow new stems instead of growing height.

Seedlings that like to be pinched:

Basil	Dahlias	Marigolds
Coleus	Fuchsias	Zinnias
Cosmos	Impatiens	Bee Balm(monarda)

There are many more. This list is just to get you started.

The Spruce by Marie Iannotti

New Guinea impatiens (*Impatiens hawkeri*) provide a spectacle of blooms in any sunny garden location. Like their shade-loving cousins, the common impatiens, New Guinea impatiens form small clumps of foliage with colorful flowers. When planted after the threat of frost, they will grow fast and bloom early. Some varieties bloom well into fall. New Guinea impatiens are low-maintenance and high performance with very little fuss.

This variety has pointed, dark green, burgundy, or variegated leaves throughout the season. Flower colors include orange, pink, red, white, and purple, but are larger than common impatiens. This plant makes a perfect addition to a pollinator garden, as the blooms attract butterflies and other beneficial insects. They make a great plant for hanging baskets. New Guinea impatiens like full to part sun with afternoon

protection and moist, well-draining soil. They also want slightly acidic soil in the range of 6.0 to 6.5 PH.

They are heavy feeders, so add organic matter to the soil and water regularly.



Since they bloom all season, they benefit from supplemental fertilizer. Give them a dose of water-soluble fertilizer for blooming flowers every three to four weeks.

Some New Guinea impatiens do require some mid-summer pruning to maximize blooms. Deadhead the flowers by pinching the stem back to its first set of leaves. This can be done throughout the season when necessary. Look for areas where the stems have grown leggy and cut them back to 6 inches. If your flowers look full, there's no need to prune them at all.