

TOUCH-ME-NOT

Impatiens



The scientific name *Impatiens* (Latin for "impatient") and the common name "touch-me-not" refer to the explosive dehiscence of the seed capsules. The mature capsules burst, sending seeds up to several meters away. Common names include *impatiens*, jewelweed, touch-me-not, snapweed, patience, and, for *I. walleriana* in Great Britain, "busy lizzie", as well as, ambiguously, balsam. As a rule-of-thumb, "jewelweed" is used exclusively for Nearctic species, "balsam" is usually applied to tropical species, and "touch-me-not" is typically used in Europe and North America.

North American *impatiens* have been used as herbal remedies for the treatment of bee stings, insect bites, and stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) rashes. They are also used after poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) contact to prevent a rash from developing. The efficacy of orange jewelweed (*I. capensis*) and yellow jewelweed (*I. pallida*) in preventing poison ivy contact dermatitis has been studied, with conflicting results. A study in 1958 found that *Impatiens biflora* was an effective alternative to standard treatment for dermatitis caused by contact with sumac, while later studies found that the species had no antipruritic effects after the rash has developed. Researchers reviewing these contradictions state that potential reason for these conflicts include the method of preparation and timing of application. A 2012 study found that while an extract of orange jewelweed and garden jewelweed (*I. balsamina*) was not effective in reducing contact dermatitis, a mash of the plants applied topically decreased it.

