

Balsam

(Impatiens balsamina)

Frilly flowers are semidouble or fully double, with some resembling camellia blossoms; colors include white, cream, pink, rose, scarlet, or purple.

Soil and Light

Locate in partial shade (in cool-summer areas, in full sun). Soil should be moist, rich, and well drained.

Planting

Since balsam seeds germinate easily once the soil warms in late spring, sow directly in the garden when danger of frost has passed. For earlier flowering, start seeds indoors four to five weeks before the last frost. Plants grow best only after the weather warms.

Comments

Widely used in Victorian gardens, balsam is just as useful today, especially when a colorful, carefree plant is needed in partial shade. Most varieties are sold as a color mix and grow 2 to 2½ feet tall. ‘Tom Thumb’ mix produces very compact bushes 10 to 15 inches tall.