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Impatiens balsamina

GARDEN BALSAM is an annual. Native to Asia (particularly India, China and Japan) it has small spurred, scarlet flowers.

It is also known as Balsam, *Balsamin* (Swedish), *Balsamina* (Italian), *Balsamine* (German), *Balsamine des jardins* (French), *Balzámina* (Slovak), *Balzamino* (Esperanto), *Balzamino ĝardeno* (Esperanto), *Belle amie* (French), *Bel-zanmy* (Creole), *Bontil* (Punjabi), Camphor plant, Common balsam, *Dupati* (Bengali), Garden touch-me-not, *Gartenspringkraut* (German), *Gelosia* (Italian), *Gulmendi* (Hindi), *Impazienti* (Italian), *Inai ayam* (Malay), *Kamantigi* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Kina çiç* (Turkish), *Netýkavka balzámina* (Czech), *Netýkavka balzáminová* (Slovak), Rose balsam, Spotted snapweed, and Zanzibar balsam; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of impatience.

There are pink, scarlet, yellow, purple or white cultivated varieties.

Warning – strong doses can cause vomiting.

Balsamina is derived from Latin *balsamum* (sweet-smelling balsam gum) and *-fer* (bearing, carrying) components meaning ‘balsam-bearing, balsamic or like balsam’.

In the East juice from the pressed flowers is used to dye fingernails red. Garden balsam is also used to dye silk.

Some authorities have indicated that in the past the leaves may have been eaten as a vegetable on the Indonesian island of Bali.