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Impatiens noli-me-tangere

[Synonyms : *Impatiens komarovii*, *Impatiens noli-tangere*, *Impatiens occidentalis*]

TOUCH-ME-NOT is an annual. Native to Europe (including Britain where it is rare), it has spurred, brown-dotted, yellow flowers.

It is also known as *Balsamine* (French), Biggoty lady, Common touch-me-not, *Echtes Springkraut* (German), *Ffromlys* (Welsh), *Grosses Springkraut* (German), *Ne me touchez pas* (French), *Netýkavka nedotklivá* (Slovak), *Netýkavka nedůtklivá* (Czech), *Netýkavka obecná* (Czech), Noli-me-tangere, Old woman's purse, Quick-in-hand, *Rührmichnichtan* (German), *Springzaad* (Dutch), *Springkorn* (Swedish), Touch-me-not balsam, *Vildbalsamin* (Swedish), *Wald-Springkraut* (German), Western jewelweed, Western touch-me-not, Wild balsam, and Yellow balsam; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of impatience.

When ripe the fruit pods open and catapult their seeds some distance.

Warning – strong doses can cause vomiting. It is said to be avoided by many animals but not goats.

Noli-me-tangere means 'touch me not' thus stressing the relatively violent seed eruption when the fruit is ripe.

Native wild plants are said to have been identified for the first time in Britain in 1632.

The Dutch physician and botanist, Hermann Boerhaave (1688-1738), believed this plant was poisonous. (Not only did he hold the Chair of Theoretical Medicine at Leiden but he is also said to have been lauded by many as one of the best European doctors of his day.)

Medicinally, although it is never used today herbalists used to recommend touch-me-not for treating fluid retention, piles and wounds.