

Kasey Hartz Natural Area Reference Sheet



Muskegon Community College

***Impatiens pallida* Nutt. Jewelweed; Pale Touch-me-not; Touch-me-not**

BALSAMINACEAE (Touch-me-not Family)



Blooming season:

Midsummer to early fall.

Plant:

0.5 - 2.5 m high, much branched annual with
juicy watery stems.

Leaves:

Alternate, thin, ovate, blunt toothed, 2.5 - 7.5 cm long.

Bright medium green.

Seedlings have paired, round, pale green leaves.

Flower:

Lemon yellow, often (ours are) spotted with red or reddish brown, especially on the lip,
although there are several color forms (Rickett 1966 Part 2).

Bilaterally symmetrical, roughly snapdragon shape. 3 petals with 2 of them cleft into 2
unequal lobes forming the lip. 3 sepals - 2 being small and green and the third lemon
yellow, large and forming a sack or funnel, ending in a spur.

The spur is bent at 90 degrees (or little more), pointing down and is
about 1/4 the length of the sack/funnel.

Flowers are held horizontally on pendant stalks.

Cleistogamous flowers can form late in the season (House Part 1).



Fruit:

The fruit is an oblong capsule, which explodes when ripe (or when
handled at near maturity), shooting seeds out, leaving 5 spiraled
valves.

Ripens late summer through fall.

Can be confused with:

Impatiens capensis or spotted touch-me-not, also called jewelweed, which has an orange base
color and a recurved spur facing the sack/funnel opening (not downward).

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Impatiens pallida Nutt.

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Jewelweed; Pale Touch-me-not; Touch-me-not

Geographic range:

Type specimen location:

State: Mostly the southern third of Michigan.

Regional: Quebec west to Saskatchewan, south to North Carolina, Tennessee, Missouri.

Habitat:

Local: Riparian.

Regional: Swamps, stream-sides, ditches, lakeshore," wet spots in woods; often in somewhat disturbed areas, including excavations" (Voss 1985, pg. 556).

Common local companions:

Sedges, rushes, and other wetland plants

Usages:

Human: The fresh juice has traditionally been used to ease nettle stings, skin rashes, and poison ivy, and as a wart remedy. *Impatiens balsamina*, a closely related species appears in the pharmacopoeia for use against fungal infections; its active ingredient is 2-methyl-naphthoquinone. Kids enjoy exploding the capsules.

Animal: Seeds are eaten by birds, and hummingbirds visit the flowers for nectar.

Why is it called that?

Impatiens for the explosive ripe seed capsules; pallida meaning pale, referring to its yellow color (versus the orange of *I. capensis*). The common name of touch-me-not again refers to its capsules.

Prepared by: Barbara Lukacs Grob, December 2007