

Cultural Details: **Impatiens (Busy Lizzie)**

Recognised as the Number 1 bedding plant in the UK, Impatiens are equally at home in the border (including shady locations) and containers and hanging baskets, and the sales season can stretch from late April well into Summer. The development of F1 hybrids means big flowers, compact plants and a very wide colour range, which is being added to all the time.

Attention to detail, together with the avoidance of big fluctuations in environmental conditions, is important to get the best from your Impatiens seed, especially early on.

Variety Selection

We offer two types of Impatiens, single-flowered and double-flowered. All the F1 hybrids are of similar high quality and characteristics.

The F2 variety Safari can be used to reduce costs, although the flowering is later and the habit is less compact.

New Guinea Impatiens, grown primarily in the UK as pot plants, are the subject of a separate leaflet (ZZ248).

Programming the Crop

Early February sowings will flower from early May, March sowings flower late May to June. Later sowings can be made to provide plants for sales in late June and July.

Propagation and Growing-on

Seed is variable in size; depending on seed lot there can be 1,000-2500 per gram. Sow into plug trays ideally to prevent root disturbance, or seedling trays. Germination takes 10-14 days at 22-24°C, when sown onto an open seed-sowing compost. Light will improve germination (10 hours at 10 ftc (108 lux) is sufficient). Keep the germinating seedlings moist at all times. Temperatures below 21 °C may cause tip abortion and seedling loss, above 24 °C may cause thermo-dormancy of the seed.

Once the seed-leaves (coyledons) have emerged, begin liquid-feeding the young seedlings, and gradually reduce the soil moisture, to prevent stretching of the young plants.

Use of supplementary lights at 5-7,000 lux will enhance development of the young plants as ambient light levels in February and March can be quite low. Gradually reduce temperatures as the seedlings develop, finishing the plugs at 17-20 °C.

After around 5-6 weeks the young plants are ready for transfer into 6- or 9-packs, or 8cm pots, or else can be used for baskets and containers.

Grow them on at around 17°C at night, 17-20°C day. Reduce liquid feed levels and watering. Plants grown on the dry and hungry side at this stage will flower more quickly, and maintain a compact habit. They will be ready for sale around 4-6 weeks after potting.

Growth Regulators

At the time of writing, the growth regulators B-Nine and Bonzi can be used (according to the manufacturers' guidelines) on Impatiens to ensure a compact habit, although it is preferable to control habit by careful use of water/feed regimes. Plant breeders are working on varieties which naturally stay compact until planted out, to avoid the stretching problem altogether.

Information provided for guidance only, as cultural practices and climatic circumstances vary.