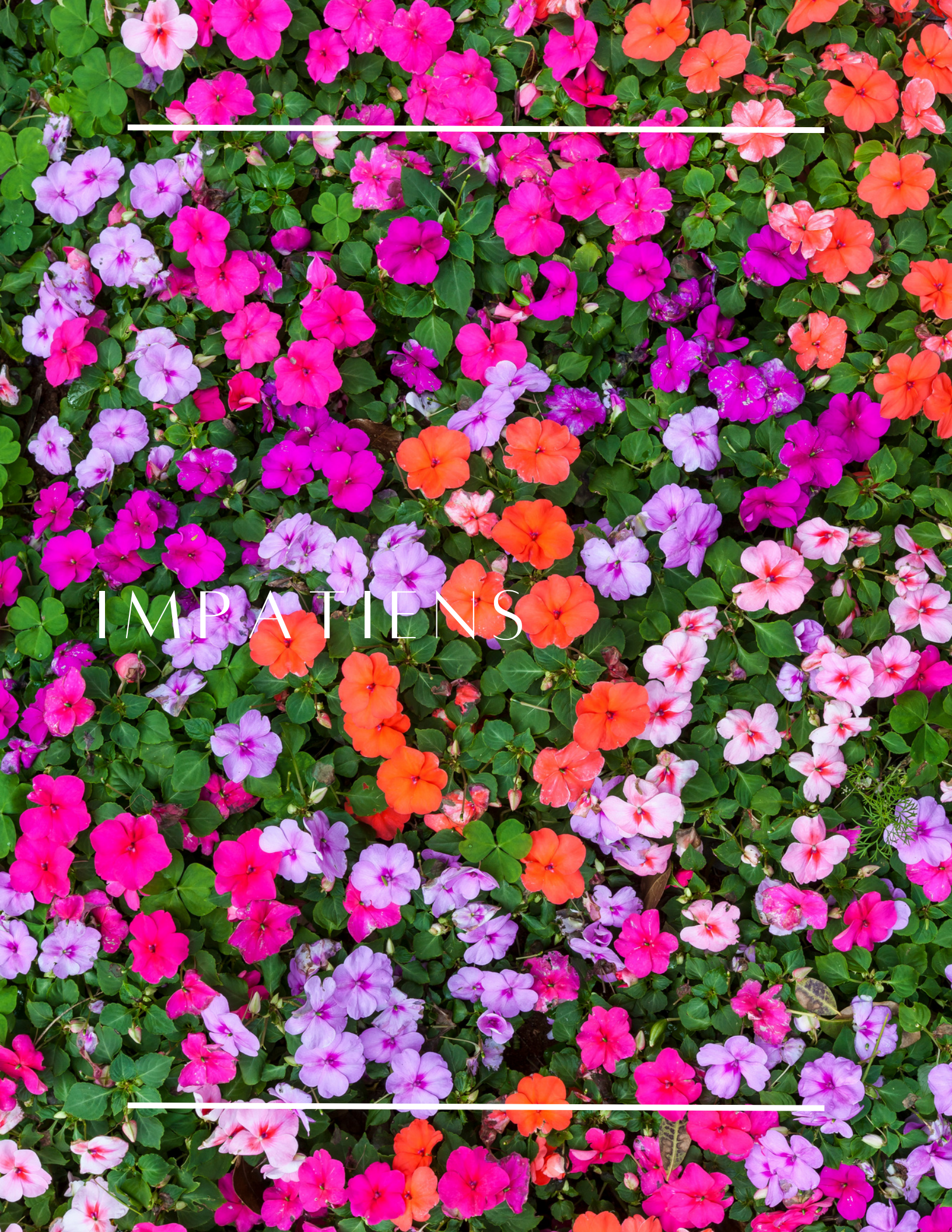




IMPATIENS

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Impatiens: The Jewels of the Shade

Few flowering plants bring as much joy to shaded corners and cloudy days as Impatiens. Known affectionately as Buzy Lizzies in Britain and celebrated across North America for their relentless, season-long bloom, these modest plants punch far above their weight in the ornamental garden. From humble window boxes to sweeping woodland borders, Impatiens have earned their place as one of the world's most popular bedding plants.

The genus *Impatiens* belongs to the family Balsaminaceae and encompasses more than 1000 species distributed across tropical and subtropical regions of Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Their name derives from the Latin word for 'impatient' - a nod to the way their seed pods burst open when touched, scattering seeds in all directions.

But what makes Impatiens so universally beloved? The answer lies in their remarkable adaptability. They thrive in the difficult shaded spots where most flowering plants struggle - under tree canopies, along north-facing walls, and in the deep shadow of fences and buildings. Their flowers come in an almost unrivalled range of colors, from the purest white through every shade of pink, red, orange, purple, and bicolor combinations, providing months of color from late spring to the first frost.



Impatiens Around the World

From the misty highlands of East Africa to the rainforests of the Himalayas and the gardens of suburban America, Impatiens have woven themselves into cultures, traditions, and horticulture across the globe. Their story is truly one of remarkable botanical diversity and human ingenuity.

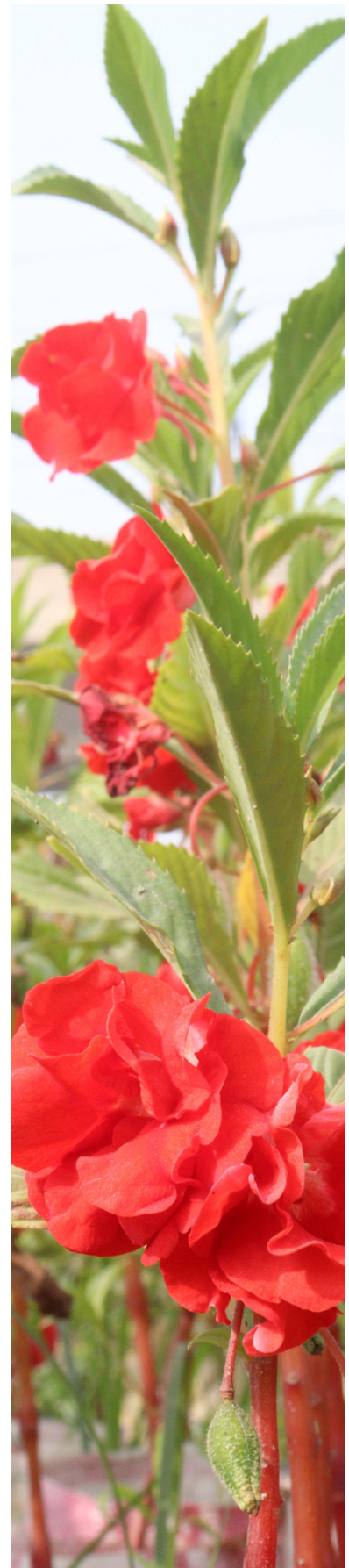
Origins & Botanical History

The genus *Impatiens* likely originated in the Himalayan foothills, where over 200 species still grow across India, Nepal, Bhutan, and southwestern China. It subsequently diversified across tropical Africa and into Madagascar and the Americas. Western horticulture encountered the showier species in the 19th century via Victorian plant hunters in East Africa. Mass outdoor cultivation followed with compact, hybrid strains developed in the 1960s and 1970s.

Cultural Significance

In eastern Asia, Impatiens hold deep cultural resonance. Children and young women have traditionally stained their fingernails with their petals mixed with alum - a practice stretching back at least 600 years. There is even a folk belief that if the dye lasts until the first snowfall, one's true love will be reciprocated.

In parts of Africa, Impatiens can be used as a boundary marker plant, as the varieties found in that area are fast-growing, dense, bushy, and reach up to 2' in height. In the United States, the native Impatiens has long been a folk remedy for poison ivy rash - the sap of its succulent stems applied directly to irritated skin is a time-honored treatment across eastern North America.



Growing Tips & Care

Light & Location

Impatiens are quintessential shade plants. They perform best in partial to full shade, receiving 2-4 hours of dappled sunlight daily. In warmer climates (Zones 8-11), afternoon shade is especially important. Morning sun with afternoon shade produces the most vigorous growth and the best flower production.

***Pro Tip:** Avoid planting Impatiens in locations that receive more than 5 hours of direct midday sun. Leaves with scorch, plants will wilt dramatically during heat, and flowering will slow significantly. Heat-tolerant *SunPatiens* are the exception!

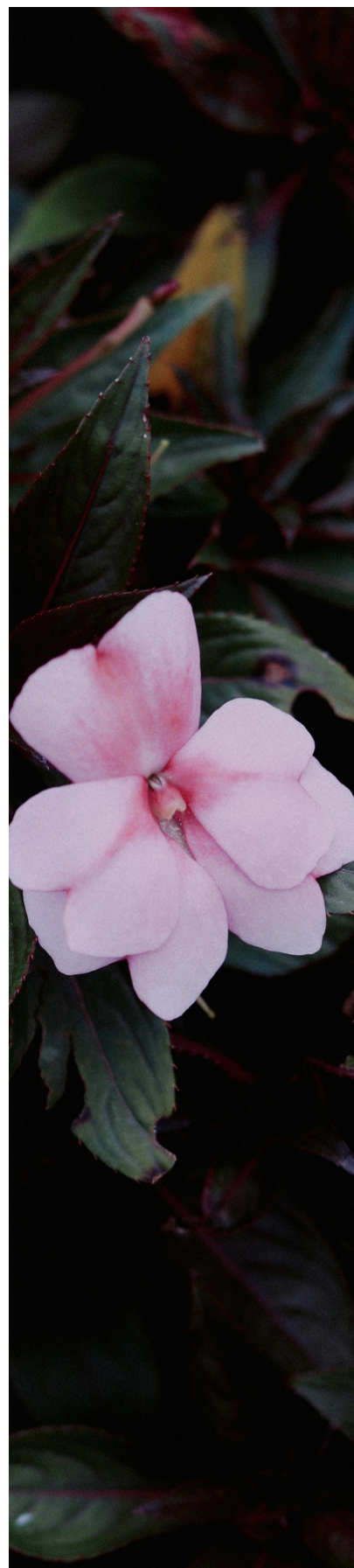
Watering

Consistent moisture is the most important factor in Impatiens success. Plants need evenly moist soil. In containers, check daily during summer heat. In beds, aim for 1" of water/week. Mulching with 2-3" of material dramatically reduces moisture loss and keeps roots cool.

Soil & Feeding

Rich, well-draining soil with plenty of organic matter is ideal. Amend clay soils with compost before planting. A balanced, slow-release fertilizer worked into the soil at planting, followed by a feed every 2-3 weeks during the growing season, will keep plants vigorous and blooming continuously.

***Pro Tip:** High-nitrogen fertilizers promote lush foliage at the expense of flowers. Choose a fertilizer with a higher middle number, such as 5-10-5 to encourage maximum bloom production throughout the season.



Varieties & Species

The world of Impatiens extends far beyond the familiar bedding varieties. Here are the most garden-worthy types for today's landscapers.

Impatiens walleriana; *Busy Lizzie/Common Impatiens*

The classic bedding Impatiens! Mounds of continuous bloom in every color. Susceptible to downy mildew; look for resistant series such as 'Beacon' and 'Imara XDR'.

Height: 8-18"

Light: Part to full shade

Impatiens hawkeri; *New Guinea Impatiens*

Bold, glossy foliage and large flowers. More sun-tolerant than walleriana. Excellent for containers and mixed borders. Not susceptible to downy mildew.

Height: 12-24"

Light: Part shade to morning sun

Impatiens x hybrida (Sakata); *SunPatians*

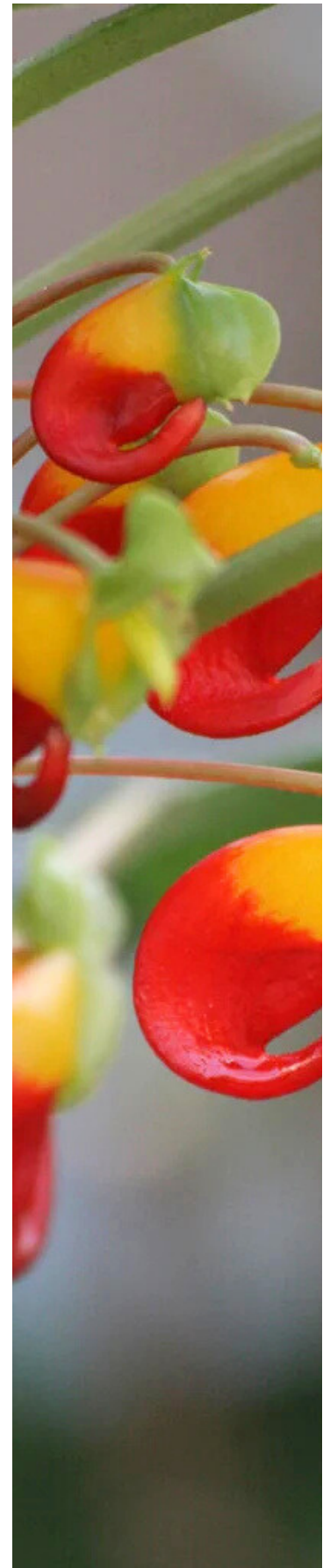
Engineered for full sun performance. Vigorous, heat-tolerant, and mildew-resistant. Spread up to 36". Ideal for mass plantings and hot sunny spots where regular Impatiens fail.

Height: 12-24"

Light: Any exposure!

Looking for something special? These three varieties are unusual and can be hard to find in our area, but are incredibly unique additions to gardens and landscapes:

- *Impatiens balfourii*; *Poor Man's Orchid*
- *Impatiens niamniamensis*; *Congo Cockatoo*
- *Impatiens noli-tangere*; *Touch-Me-Not*



Seasonal Planting Guide

Timing is everything with Impatiens. Plant too early, and a late frost will destroy your investment. Plant too late and you lose weeks of the blooming season.

***Pro Tip:** In the PNW, Impatiens can be kept as short-lived perennials. Bring pots indoors before the first frost, cut plants back by half, and maintain in bright, indirect light. With proper care and conditions, they will resume growth and bloom again the following spring.

Season	Task	Notes
Early Spring (March-April)	Start seeds indoors 8-10 weeks before the final frost	Surface sow on moist mix. Light required for germination. Maintain 70-75°F. Germinate in 14-21 days.
Late Spring (May)	Harden off seedlings; transplant after last frost	Gradually introduce to outdoor conditions over 7-10 days. Soil temperature should be at least 60°F.
Early Summer (June)	Plant out purchased plugs; begin liquid feeding	Space 8-12" apart for walleriana. 12-18" apart for New Guinea types.
Midsummer (July-August)	Deadhead if needed; cut back if leggy	Increase watering in heat. Feed every 2 weeks. Watch for aphids and mites.
Early Fall (September)	Take cuttings to overwinter; collect seeds	Root 3-4" stem cuttings in water or propagation mix. Overwinter as houseplants in bright, indirect light.
Late Fall (October-November)	Remove spent plants; amend beds with compost	Do NOT compost diseased material. Amend beds for next spring. Store healthy cuttings at 60-65°F.

Design Ideas for Your Garden

Impatiens greatest design strength is its versatility. Here are some inspiring ways to incorporate them across garden styles and settings.

Woodland Carpet

Mass plant a single color of walleriana under high tree canopies for a dramatic woodland floor effect. Combine with perennials for a textured display.

Container Drama

Pack New Guinea or SunPatiens into large containers with trailing Ipomoea and upright Cordyline or Cannas for a lush, tropical-inspired composition.

Window Box Magic

Single-color walleriana in window boxes creates stunning monochromatic displays. Try deep red paired with chartreuse Lysimachia, or white with a silver dusty miller.

Edging & Borders

Low-growing, compact walleriana series make excellent, long-lasting bed edging. Plant in a single color for formality, or mix harmonious tones for a more relaxed cottage garden feel.

Companion Planting with Impatiens

Hostas/Ferns

- Why it works: Bold foliage contrast, thrives in the same conditions
- Best Impatiens pairing: Any color; Bright colors are standout with dark foliage

Caladium

- Why it works: Dramatic tropical foliage adds height and texture
- Best Impatiens pairing: White Impatiens echoes Caladium's white veining

Coleus

- Why it works: Stunning foliage contrast; endless color combinations
- Best Impatiens pairing: Match or contrast with Coleus leaf tones