

BWSR Featured Plant

Name: Yellow jewelweed (*Impatiens pallida*)

Plant family: Touch-me-not (*Balsaminaceae*)

The name “jewelweed” likely comes from the plant’s dangling, somewhat shiny flowers or from the tendency of water to bead on its leaves. Both can glisten in the sun, like jewels.

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Susan Nelson



Yellow jewelweed, AKA pale jewelweed or pale touch-me-not, is an annual plant of moist or mesic soils. The name “touch-me-not” refers to the seed capsules, which burst suddenly when touched. This habit also explains the name

Plant Stats

STATEWIDE WETLAND INDICATOR STATUS: FACW

PRIMARY USES: Pollinator and wildlife benefits, ethnobotanical uses

Impatiens, Latin for “impatient.” Pale jewelweed is related to common African Impatiens (*I. walleriana*) and New Guinea Impatiens (*I. hawkeri*), two introduced species widely planted in gardens. A native relative, spotted jewelweed (*I. capensis*), grows in similar but more strictly wet habitats.

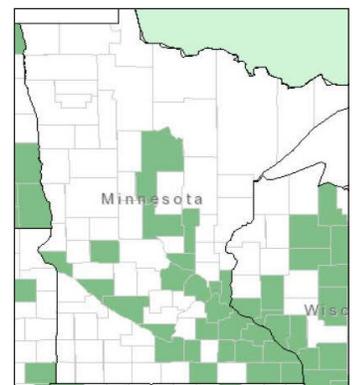
Uses

Jewelweed has a long ethnobotanical history. The Ojibwe, Cherokee and Iroquois used the sap, leaves, stems and roots to treat a variety of ailments. Jewelweed sap still has a reputation for relieving the itch of poison ivy and stinging

nettle. Yellow jewelweed flowers attract ruby-throated hummingbirds and many types of bees, especially bumblebees. The caterpillars of some moths eat the leaves. Gamebirds such as ruffed grouse and ring-necked pheasants eat the seeds.

Range

Native yellow jewelweed grows in the eastern half of the US and adjacent Canadian provinces. In southeastern, west-central and north-central Minnesota counties, it’s found in moist woodlands, floodplain forests, streambanks and meadows.



Range map source: USDA NRCS Plants Database

Identification

Yellow jewelweed is a branching plant that grows 2 to 5 feet tall. Its alternate leaves are elliptical, up to 4 inches long and 2 inches wide, with rounded or minutely pointed teeth. Stems are smooth and glaucous — blue-green from a waxy coating on their surface — and have swollen nodes. Yellow flowers grow from the upper leaf axils,

blooming from July into September. They are funnel-shaped, with a wide, lobed lower lip, a smaller upper lip (called a flag), and two small petals framing the sides. A short, nectar-filled spur extends from the back of the flower, bending down to the base of the funnel. Capsules are oblong to elliptical and up to 1 inch long when mature.

Planting Recommendations



Yellow jewelweed can be grown from seed. It thrives in moist or wet soils and semi-shade, but it will tolerate full sun and drier conditions than spotted jewelweed. Once established, yellow jewelweed will reseed to form advancing patches, but it is not considered aggressive. It will succeed in low woodland settings as well as in wetlands.

Similar Species



Top, from left: Stems of pale jewelweed are glaucous. Those of spotted jewelweed are green. Flowers of pale jewelweed, second from right, and spotted jewelweed, far right, differ in color and spur length. **Bottom:** Typical leaves of pale jewelweed, left, are larger than those of spotted jewelweed.

Spotted jewelweed (*I. capensis*) has narrower, translucent stems and orange flowers bearing longer spurs. Its stems are green, not glaucous.



References

Illinois Wildflowers: http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/wetland/plants/yl_jewelweed.htm

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Plants Database: <https://plants.usda.gov/core/profile?symbol=IMPA>

Native American Ethnobotany Database: <http://naeb.brit.org/uses/search/?string=Impatiens+pallida>

Wetland Plants of Minnesota, by Steve W. Chadde. Second edition, 2012.

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