

Downy Mildew of Impatiens in Home Gardens



Photo courtesy of University of Florida

BACKGROUND

Downy Mildew of Impatiens is a new disease for BC gardens. It is caused by a fungus-like pathogen (*Plasmopara obducens*) and was first observed on garden impatiens (*Impatiens walleriana*) in the United Kingdom in 2002. Prior to that, it was identified as early as 1897 on wild impatiens (jewelweed) in Vermont. In 2011, there were outbreaks of this disease in many US states.

There are many different types of downy mildew and they tend to be host specific, so the downy mildew that affects garden impatiens will not spread to any other plants.

WHAT ARE THE HOST PLANTS?

Susceptible hosts include standard garden impatiens, double impatiens and mini-impatiens and any hybrids of *I. walleriana*. Fortunately, New Guinea Impatiens (*Impatiens hawkeri*) types are **not susceptible** to this disease nor are other shade loving bedding plants.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Early symptoms include yellowing or yellow spotting of the leaves. This is accompanied by a downward cupping of upper leaves giving the appearance that plants need to be watered. A fine white coating may be visible on the underside of the leaves. Over time the flowers and leaves drop, eventually leaving bare stems with a few small leaves at the top. Finally, the stems completely collapse and the plant dies.

ARE THERE WAYS TO PREVENT OR CONTROL DOWNY MILDEW?

- Once plants are infected they will not recover.
- Infected plants should be removed (including plants, leaf debris and roots), bagged and disposed of immediately. Do not compost diseased plant material. If infected plants are left in the garden or compost pile there is a high risk that the fungal spores will overwinter in the soil and affect future plantings.
- If you have had impatiens downy mildew in your garden, plant alternative “non-host” bedding plants for the next 1 – 2 seasons.

If you have not had impatiens downy mildew in your garden and choose to plant impatiens, the following preventative measures should be taken:

- Clean up all garden debris at the end of the previous season.
- When planting impatiens space plants appropriately so that leaf surfaces will dry quickly.
- Water deeply less often, at soil level. Do not water in the evening. Avoid overhead irrigation.
- Plant impatiens later in the spring, when temperatures increase and the chance of extended periods of rain decreases.

Note: there are no fungicides available to home gardeners that will control downy mildew on impatiens.

WHAT CAN I PLANT INSTEAD OF IMPATIENS?

Impatiens alternatives include begonias, coleus, New Guinea impatiens & more. A perennial garden that includes shade loving hostas, brunnera, ferns in combination with annuals for splash of summer colour is also worth considering.

See reverse for more alternatives.

ANNUALS FOR SHADE OR PART SHADE

WAX BEGONIAS: (*Begonia x semperflorens-cultorum*) do best in partial shade. Choose from bronze or green-leaved varieties, blooming in shades of pink, red and white.

TUBEROUS BEGONIAS: (*Begonia x tuberhybrida*) produce large flowers in a wide variety of colours and forms. They prefer shade most of the day, but their delicate flowers need protection from wind. All of these begonias like moist, well-drained soil and are deer-resistant.

BROWALLIA: Browallia, or Sapphire Flower, blooms heavily from early spring to fall frost. It's best in cool or coastal gardens, but with partial shade or an eastern exposure, it will consistently grow well.

COLEUS: A classic shade loving annual foliage plant. Available in a variety of colors and spectacular variegation.

FUCHSIA: (*Fuchsia x hybrida*). Some are best used in containers or hanging baskets but upright cultivars will do well in the landscape. Flowers can be solid or a bicolor red, purple, pink, or white, among others.

IPOMOEA: The sweet potatoes you use in full sun are also suitable for part shade. Darker foliage colors are best with more sun so in dense shade, the chartreuse options are best.

MIMULUS: Quick to flower and prefers a slightly cooler position in dappled shade, Mimulus will flower from early spring through late summer.

NEW GUINEA IMPATIENS: A shade-tolerant plant known for intensely colored flowers. The New Guinea impatiens are easy growing, low maintenance flowering plants ideal for hanging baskets and window boxes, for edges and flower borders, and for massing beneath taller shrubs.

LOBELIA: Lobelia or Cardinal Flower prefers partial, not full shade. Spreading varieties have blue, pink, or white flowers whereas upright varieties often have red or white flowers.

THUNBERGIA: Black-eyed Susan vine or Clock Vine, is a quick-growing vine boasting many open-faced flowers great for baskets or containers where you need a trailing plant. Afternoon shade is fine as long as the area receives adequate morning light.

SUMMER INTEREST PERENNIALS FOR SHADE

HEUCHERA AND HEUCHERELLA: These two genera have seen an explosion of foliage colors introduced in recent years. Yellows, oranges, pinks, peaches, reds, and purples are all available. They look terrific massed and make stunning additions to mixed containers.

WOODLAND PHLOX: Offers violet blue flowers in part to full shade that are fragrant and hardy.

ASTILBE: Showy flowers top glossy, fern-like foliage on this great perennial for moist shade. These plants thrive in tubs or mixed containers and make excellent cut flowers.

PULMONARIA: Lungworts are among the most dependable and showy spring-blooming perennials and many types have attractive foliage throughout the season. The clusters of tiny, bell-shaped flowers are an added bonus from mid-April to late May. Once these delicate-looking blossoms fade, Lungworts continue to display attractive foliage through summer until frost.

HOSTAS: Valued for colourful foliage and in some cases summer flowers too! These hardy, adaptable and easy to grow plants come in sizes from dwarf to giant, colors from solids of greens, blues and variegations of mixed colors. Thrives in shade.

Some other shade tolerant perennials are Bletilla or Ground Orchid, Brunnera -the Jack Frost cultivar was the Perennial of the Year for 2012 - and the shade-loving Epimedium grandiflorum or "Bishop's Hat" which has dainty pink flowers and foliage that turns bronze in the fall.



T. Begonia



Coleus



Fuchsia



Heuchera



Astilbe



Hostas

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