

# Impatiens Downy Mildew Today

by Carol Ann Harlos

Impatiens downy mildew is still a real concern for the gardener. The good news is that its impact is being felt less and less since its huge breakout about five years ago. Although I certainly detest plant disease the loss of impatiens at the peak of the gardening season, it has finally forced gardeners to try newer shade loving mass bedding plants. I well remember judging gardens in years past and thinking "Isn't there another shade loving plant that gardeners can easily grow in the shade?" Below are some shade loving plants to consider.

New Guinea impatiens don't bloom as well in deep shade as *Impatiens walleriana* but they do provide interesting foliage. The three series of SunPatiens for example have different growing habits, one spreads, one is compact, one grows into a vase like shape. The SunPatiens series are good for growing in full sun, partial shade and heat. Flowers are produced from spring to autumn frosts.

Caladium tubers simply like warm soil (65 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit), shade, and good drainage to produce leaves in exquisite colors all summer long! Simply plant right side up about 2 inches down in the soil (the bottom side is quite smooth.) Plant about 2 caladiums per square foot. Larger tubers produce more leaves. Some gardeners "de-eye" caladiums that have many growing points to get bigger leaves. When autumn temperatures drop dig up the tubers and leaves. Let them rest until next spring. Then start again.

And then.... dragon wing begonias! If you have some already, simply make cuttings...more plants! They grow in full sun to partial shade, are easy, striking, look tropical, produce lots of pink or red flowers, and can also be grown as houseplants!



Tom Creswell, Purdue University,  
Bugwood.org

How about tuberous begonias? They have amazing flowers, are low maintenance, look great as bedding plants in shade, can also be used in flower boxes and hanging baskets, overwinter easily, PLUS you can eat the flowers.

Have you tried *Browallia*? *Browallia*, also called "bush violet," is a foot-tall, upright shade annual that blooms blue, white, or blue-violet. The star-shaped flowers have 5-petals. (It is in the Solanaceae family, a relative of tomatoes, eggplant, potatoes) A true shade lover, *Browallia* charms the darkest corners of the garden with its deep green foliage and dainty flowers.

And finally grow some of the many coleus varieties. I personally would like at least one of each variety. Right now some botanical changes in classification and naming are occurring so you may see plants that you call "coleus" called *Solenostemon* or *Plectranthus*. Don't let that stop you from enjoying the exquisite leaves. They are easy to grow from seeds as well as cuttings. Make some cuttings at the end of the season to enjoy indoors, to propagate or simply to share with friends. Not using impatiens should be regarded as a gardening opportunity!



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