



HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

Jewelweed in the Garden: Pretty, Possibly Useful

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Lee Reich is an expert on **gardening** who writes about the subject for the Associated Press. Recently, he wrote a story about a plant that a gardening friend could not identify -- even though the plant is common.

The plant has green leaves and large, yellow flowers. It appeared in Reich's friend's garden although he had not planted it. The area did not get a lot of sunlight.

Reich identified the growth as soon as he saw it --- jewelweed.

His friend was surprised. He thought he knew what jewelweed looked like. In fact, he had an area in his garden filled with the plants. But those were bright orange.

It turns out that jewelweed comes in a lot of colors. Orange is most common in the United States. But jewelweed flowers can be yellow, pink and even brown.

The fruit of the jewelweed explodes at the lightest touch. Seeds fly out in all directions. That quality is why "touch-me-not" became the common name for jewelweed.

Scientifically, the plants are known as impatiens. *Impatiens capensis* is the name of the orange touch-me-not. The jewelweed with the yellow flowers is *Impatiens pallida*. And there are a thousand other kinds of jewelweed. All are famous for their ability to produce bright, colorful flowers even when growing in **shade**. The flowers appeal to bees, hummingbirds and other **pollinators**.

Reich says jewelweed's "impatient" method of seed spread might be a good quality if you want a plant that spreads and returns every year. Of course, a plant that is too good at that could take over more space than you expect or want it to.

Anything with 'weed' in its name might seem like a bad addition to your garden, Reich notes. But he says some jewelweed versions are pretty enough to have been offered by dealers in native plants.

Jewelweed is not just another pretty flower, however. The U.S. Forest Service website notes that the plant has a long history in Native American medicine. Jewelweed sap, or fluid, can be used directly on the body to ease pain and itching from many conditions, including **poison ivy rash**. The sap has also been shown to have antifungal properties and can be used to treat **athlete's foot**.

I'm Caty Weaver.

Lee Reich wrote this story for the Associated Press. Caty Weaver adapted it for VOA Learning English. Ashley Thompson was the editor.

Words in This Story

gardening - *n.* to use an area of ground to grow plants, such as flowers or vegetables

shade - *n.* an area darkened when something blocks the light of the sun

pollinator - *n.* anything that helps carry pollen from one plant to another of the same kind so that it will produce seeds

impatient - *adj.* not willing to wait for something or someone: not patient

poison ivy rash - *n.* a condition in which the skin becomes itchy, red and uneven after contact with oils produced by a poison ivy plant

athlete's foot - *n.* a condition in which the skin between and around the toes cracks and peels

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