

# Orange Touch-me-not (*Impatiens aurella*)

## Balsaminaceae (Touch-me-not Family)

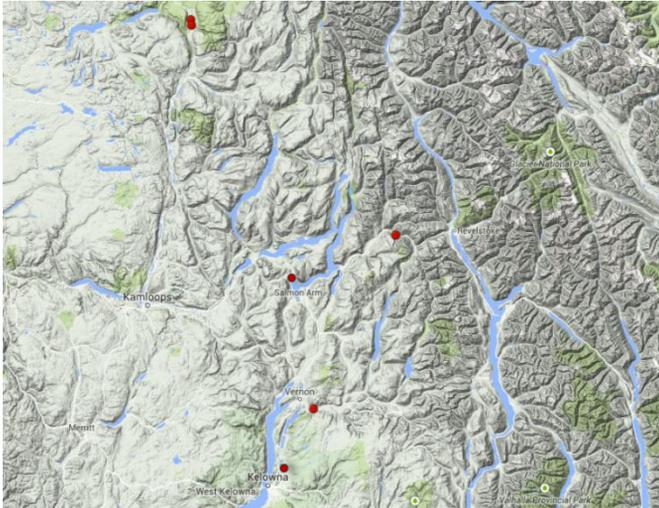
 Status: Blue / Not Assessed ■

 Best Survey Time: Jul to Sep ■

 General Habitat: Wetland ■

### RANGE

- Found in North America from British Columbia and the northwest United States
- In B.C., reported from several widely scattered sites from Kelowna north to Clearwater area and east towards Revelstoke



**Figure 1** B.C. distribution of *Impatiens aurella* (adapted from BC CDC 2014)

### HABITAT

- Usually found in a fringe of tall vegetation and cattails around a variety of wetland habitats, including marshes, drainage ditches, and lakeshores in the Interior Cedar Hemlock, Interior Douglas Fir and Ponderosa Pine Biogeoclimatic Zones
- Associates include awned sedge (*Carex atherodes*), reed canarygrass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), cattails (*Typha* spp.) and loosestrife



**Figure 2** Typical densely vegetated habitat at edge of wetland



**Figure 3** Close-up of *Impatiens aurella* from near Vernon, B.C., showing its characteristic abruptly tapered spur and spotted petals

### LIFE HISTORY

- Annual species that blooms and produces capsules from July to September
- Early-season flowers are cleistogamous (non-opening), lacking petals, and self-pollinating; later-season flowers are chasmogamous (opening at maturity), with showy petals that attract pollinators (insects, hummingbirds) for out-crossing
- Mature capsules of chasmogamous flowers explode, launching the seeds some distance from the mother plant; capsules of cleistogamous flowers do not explode and contain smaller seeds



**Figure 4** Close-up of *Impatiens aurella* showing self-pollinating, non-opening cleistogamous flowers in full bloom

# *Impatiens aurella* (continued)

## DESCRIPTION

### General

- Tall annual herbs from fibrous roots and with erect, hairless stems, often branching and over a meter tall

### Leaves

- Leaves alternate, elliptic to lanceolate, 2 to 8 cm long
- Leaf margins serrated, with each tooth ending in a water-exuding hydathode (pore)

### Flowers

- One or a few flowers together on delicate stalks
- Flowers orange, bilateral, with an inflated spurred sepal that tapers at an angle of about 35 to 40°
- Flowers 0.9 to 1.4 cm in length from pedicel (flower stalk) to base of spur
- Lower petals, and often the spurred sepal, with red-orange spots

### Fruits

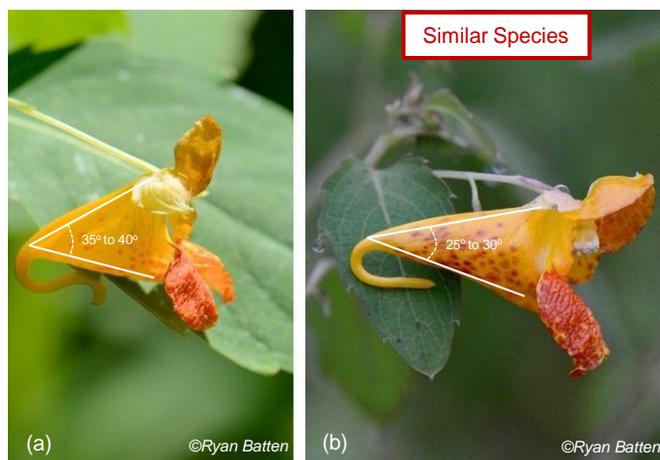
- Capsules, 1 to 2 cm long, containing 1 to 6 green or dark brown seeds



**Figure 5** Other than the difference in flower size and angle, both (a) *Impatiens aurella* and (b) *Impatiens capensis* look remarkably similar and occupy the same habitats

## IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- Spotted touch-me-not (*Impatiens capensis*) has larger flowers measuring 1.4 to 1.9 cm from pedicel to base of spur, and the spurred sepal tapers at an angle of about 25 to 30°
- Spurless touch-me-not (*Impatiens ecornuta*), as the name suggests, lacks a curving spur
- Common touch-me-not (*Impatiens noli-tangere*) has larger flowers that are yellow
- Pacific touch-me-not (*Impatiens x pacifica*), not yet reported in B.C., is a hybrid between spurless and spotted touch-me-not that produces flowers that are occasionally spurred and spotted, but not both; flowers are mixed within populations



**Figure 6** Comparison of relative flower size between (a) *Impatiens aurella*, which has a more abrupt taper in the spur, and (b) *Impatiens capensis* (scale equal)

## GENERAL THREATS AND GUIDANCE

- **Avoid development in areas with known occurrences of *Impatiens aurella* through project relocation or redesign**
- Protect wetland habitats from disturbance and development, and ensure natural hydrological processes can occur
- Monitor the impact of invasive species and their control measures at known sites
- Follow provincial methods for when and how to conduct plant species at risk surveys
- Follow provincial policy and guidance on how to avoid, minimize, restore and offset impacts to plant species at risk and their habitats
- Report any sightings to the B.C. Conservation Data Centre ([cdcddata@gov.bc.ca](mailto:cdcddata@gov.bc.ca)) and FLNR Ecosystems Section ([josie.symonds@gov.bc.ca](mailto:josie.symonds@gov.bc.ca))

## REFERENCES

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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