**JEWELWEED**

*Impatiens capensis*  
[im-PAY-shuns ka-PEN-sis]  
(previously *Impatiens. biflora*)

**Family:** Balsaminaceae

**Names:** touch-me-not, spotted jewelweed, snapweed, wild celandine, lady’s earrings, quick-in-the-hand, wild balsam, balsam-weed, slipperweed, silverweed, wild lady’s slipper, speckled jewels

**Description:** Height is to 5 feet and width of 2 feet. The stems are smooth, glassy, water-filled and swollen at the nodes in the spring and early summer. The flowers are drooping, suspended on a thin stem, with 1-inch spur on back, a few grouped together, usually orange-yellow with red-brown spots. The leaves are elongated ovals, about 3 ½ inches long, coarsely toothed around the edge, gray-green. It blooms from June to September. The seeds are fired from the capsule in summer which has provided inspiration for some of the common names. The spurred flowers are followed by a capsular fruit which bursts elastically into spirally coiled valves, expelling the seeds.

**Cultivation:** An annual from Canada south to Alabama and Oklahoma. Germinates in 10-18 days. Needs light, but not direct sunlight, to germinate. Space 3 feet apart when planting. Prefers semishade. Propagated by seed.

**History:** The names impatiens and touch-me-not describe how the seed capsules burst open even when lightly touched. Native Americans called it crowing cock.

** Constituents:** 2 methoxy-1, 4 naphthoquinone, fungicide, tannin

**Energetics:** sweet, bland, cool, toxic

**Meridians/Organs affected:** liver, stomach

**Medicinal Uses:** The juice from the broken stem is a well-known folk remedy for poison ivy rash. It also works on poison oak. Can be frozen into small ice cubes and used. Also relieves the pain of insect bites, nettle stings, burns, sprains, ringworm and various skin diseases. The juice is also made into an ointment for hemorrhoids, warts and corns. It used to be taken for jaundice and asthma. Jewelweed tea has a foul taste and is emetic, cathartic and diuretic.

**Remedy:** Simmer leaves and stems in a large pot of water, which will burn clear to medium dark brown. Bottle or freeze.

**Ointment:** Simmer a small amount of jewelweed in light vegetable oil (any except olive oil) for 10-15 minutes. Use only a small handful of stems per quart of oil. Strain out the herb, add a handful of beeswax to thicken it, and heat until melted. Add more oil or
beeswax as needed. Break open one oil-soluble vitamin E capsule, add and cool. Lasts months if refrigerated.

**Toxicity:** Large doses taken internally induce vomiting.

**Cosmetic Uses:** Jewelweed makes a good hair rinse for those troubled by itchy scalp. Add the greens to baths for a skin-soothing soak. The juice has been used to stain fingernails red.

**Other uses:** The whole plant produces a yellow dye.

**Dye:**
- 1 pot jewelweed
- 1/3 cup alum
- 1 Tbsp cream of tartar
- 1/4 tsp tin
- 1 lb wool
- 4 gal water

For dyeing use everything but the roots. Cover the jewelweed with water and boil for 1 hour. Strain out the plant material and add enough water to make 4 gallons. Dissolve the cream of tartar, then the alum, then the tin in the hot dye ooz. Stir well. Cool slightly. Raise the temperature of the wool either in a separate pot of water by successively warmer rinses and add it to the dye pot. Slowly raise to the simmering point and hold it there for about 3/4 hour, stirr. Cool in the dye ooz and then rins until the water runs clear. Rather than putting more wool in for an exhaust bath, boil more jewelweed in the leftover dye and start over to get a good strong color. Color: soft orange.

**Culinary Uses:** Jewel Weed is said to be edible, if taken when the plants are young and no longer than 5-6 inches in height. They should be boiled and drained at least twice before eating with butter and seasoning. The very young sprouts, about 2 inches tall, are good raw in a salad and jewelweed sprouts in cream sauce on toast makes a good breakfast. The seeds are eaten raw or used as a topping on desserts. They taste very similar to walnuts.

**Recipes:**

**Creamed Jewelweed Shoots & Rice**
1 ¾ lb of young jewelweed shoots (4-6 inches tall)  
boiling water  
3 Tbsp butter  
1/4 cup flour  
1 1/2 cups milk  
1 tsp soy sauce  
2 hard boiled eggs, diced

Place the jewelweed shoots in a large saucepan. Cover with boiling water and boil for 5 minutes. Drain and cut the shoots into small sections. Melt the butter in a saucepan, stir in the flour, soy sauce and milk. Cook until the sauce thickens. Add jewelweed shoots and the eggs. Serve hot over cooked rice. (Wild Plant Cookbook)

**Jewel Rarebit**
1 cup chopped jewelweed shoots and leaves  
2 cups water for first cooking  
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3 Tbsp butter  
3 Tbsp flour  
1/2 cup flat beer  
1 cup milk  
1/2 cup grated Mozzarella cheese  
4 slices toasted bread  
4 strips cooked bacon, drained

In pan, combine jewelweed and water. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer 5 minutes. Drain and discard water. Add fresh water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer 3 more minutes. Drain and discard water. In skillet, melt butter. Stir in flour until a paste forms. Slowly add flat beer, until mixture is creamy. Add milk slowly, stirring constantly. Bring to a boil and stir until mixture thickens (about 1 minute). Remove from heat and stir in cheese and jewelweed. Serve on toast. Top with bacon slices if desired. (Discovering Wild Plants)
References:

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