

BALLOON FLOWER PRODUCTION AND CONSUMER CARE

INTRODUCTION

- Common name: Balloon flower
- Scientific name: *Platycodon grandiflorus*
- Perennial; native to northeast Asia
- Grows between 2–3' tall and 10–18" wide
- Name derives from puffy, balloon-like buds, which open into bell-shaped flowers
- Narrowly oval leaves are 1–3" long and have toothed edges
- Balloon flowers are 2–3" across and bloom for a month or more in mid-summer
- Flowers are typically a deep violet but white, pink, pale blue, and lilac flowers are also available
- Hardy in zones 3–8

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

- Grows well in full sun or light shade
- Prefers light, well-drained, slightly acid soil
- Tolerates dry soil and grows poorly in soggy soil
- Feed once in the spring with a slow release nitrogen fertilizer
- Use a 1–2" layer of mulch to conserve soil moisture and protect roots in winter



PROPAGATION

- Deep roots are difficult to dig up and divide safely
- Easily grown from seed
- Sow seeds 12–18" apart directly in the garden
- Leave seeds uncovered
- Germination will occur in 10–15 days at 70° F
- Plants will flower the same season they are planted

DISORDERS

- Root rot (*Rhizoctonia solani*)
 - Lower leaves discolor and young shoots begin to wilt

- Roots turn brown and plant quickly dies
- Remove all infected plants and nearby soil
- Gray mold (*Botrytis cinerea*)
 - Leaves become mottled and blotched
 - Improve drainage and air circulation
 - Remove infected foliage
 - Remove plants that become infected year after year
- Downy mildew (*Phytophthora*)
 - Forms leaf spots with downy white or gray patches
 - Reduce humidity and remove infected foliage

CONSUMER CARE

- Outstanding in floral arrangements due to their blue color
- Excellent border plants
- Taller varieties may require staking
- Dwarf varieties are ideal for use in containers or small beds

CULTIVARS AND SPECIES

- *Platycodon grandiflorus*

- 'Albus': white flowers
- 'Mariesii': bright blue flowers
- 'Shell Pink': soft pale pink flowers
- 'Sentimental Blue': single blue flowers, very compact growth

References

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_bellflower

<http://www.yardener.com/BalloonFlower.html>

<http://www.ct.gov/caes/cwp/view.asp?a=2823&q=377548>

Reviewed by:

Dr. Yin-Tung Wang
Research and Development
Matsui Nursery
Salinas, CA

Dr. Mike Orzolek
Professor of Horticulture
Penn State University

Dr. Frank Flora
National Program Leader
Nutrition, Food Safety, and Quality
USDA-ARS

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by

Thomas M. Blessington, David L. Clement, and Kevin G. Williams
Central Maryland Research and Education Center
University of Maryland

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