**Platycodon grandiflorus** (N.J. von Jacquin) A.L.P.P. de Condolle  
**Balloon Flower**  
(*Campanula grandiflora, Platycodon glaucus, Platycodon grandiflorum, Wahlenbergia grandiflora*)

**Other Common Names:**  Chinese Bellflower, Japanese Bellflower, or Platycodon.  
**Family:**  Campanulaceae.  
**Cold Hardiness:**  Useful as a herbaceous perennial in USDA zones 4(3b) through 8(9a).  
**Foliage:**  Herbaceous perennial foliage that dies to the ground each winter; whorled near the base of the plant, becoming alternate on elongated stems; simple; ovate to ovate-lanceolate; 1 to 3 long; tips acute to acuminate; margins sharply serrate to dentate; bases broadly acute to cuneate; medium to dark green in color above, glaucous blue-green beneath; petioles short.  
**Flower:**  The flower buds swell to an inflated balloon-like state prior to splitting open to create a five-lobed 2 to 3 diameter cup-shaped scentless campanulate flower; the solitary flowers are usually in a terminal position; color of the flowers varies from dark to pale violet blue, pink, to white; the veins tend to be darker colored than the background tissues; bloom continues from late spring into summer; semi-double flowering forms are also available.  
**Fruit:**  Dehiscent five-valved capsules; not ornamental; deadhead to prolong bloom.  
**Stem / Bark:**  Stems smooth; green; glabrous; rather sparsely branched; stems exude a milky latex if cut; Buds — foliose; green; Bark — not applicable.  
**Habit:**  Balloon Flower grows as an irregular mound of deciduous stems originating from a perennial crown; stems tend to be upright and then splay out to form a more spreading plant as the season progresses; depending upon the site, plants grow 15 to 24 (36) tall with an equal or greater spread; plants tend to develop a strong tap root, so are most easily transplanted from containers or direct seeded; if direct seeded, bloom may not occur until the second year; the overall texture is medium to medium-coarse.  
**Cultural Requirements:**  Full sun to partial shade with best growth occurring on acidic soils with steady moisture levels; plants will tolerate soils with higher pH, but they will not tolerate poor drainage; heat tolerance is better in locations with lower relative humidity and a bit of afternoon shade; this species does not perform well in Gulf Coastal regions; deadheading will promote return bloom; division is usually not required.  
**Pathological Problems:**  Root rots in soils with less than excellent drainage is common; otherwise plants are mostly disease and pest free.  
**Ornamental Assets:**  The pretty flowers are interesting both in bud and bloom and continue for an extended season; the blue colors are unusual for summer flowers.  
**Limitations & Liabilities:**  Intolerant of poorly drained soils or combined heat and high relative humidity; the growth habit can be a bit open and haphazard.  
**Landscape Utilization:**  Typically *P. grandiflorus* is grown as a part of a perennial or mixed annual and perennial border; plants are more effective in masses where they support each other from lodging; a good perennial for the cut flower or rock gardens; cut flower ends should be seared at harvest; the buds are a favorite in children’s gardens.  
**Other Comments:**  New growth tends to emerge late in the spring, sometimes giving the impression that plants have not survived the winter, so it is prudent to combine this species with winter and early spring color to fill in the vacant spot during the cool season; this is a good reliable perennial for the Upper South and Midwest, but tends to be shorter lived in the Deep South; good plants can be seen in cooler portions of our region; the genus name in Greek means a wide bell and the specific epithet refers to the species’ large flowers.
Native Habitat: East Asia.

Related Taxa: Several cultivars are available for dwarf growth habits, increased flowering, or various flower colors and forms; dwarf selections are mostly from *Platycodon grandiflorus* (N.J. von Jacquin) A.L.P.P. de Condolle var. *mariesii* (Hort.) G. Nicholson (*Platycodon mariesii*) the Dwarf Balloon Flower.


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