

Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)

- Native to central and western Himalaya.
- It was first introduced into gardens in 1839. Today it is illegal to plant it or introduce it into the wild.
- Common names include Indian balsam, police men's helmet, touch-me-not and poor mans' orchid.
- Each plant can produce up to 2,500 seeds !
- Seeds are dispersed by exploding seed pods. The seed can be thrown up to 7 metres and will travel in water to colonise downstream.
- Favouring areas of wet ground, Himalayan balsam has quickly colonised rivers, damp woodland and ditches in Derbyshire and the rest of the UK...

Why it's a problem

- The plant out competes native flora for light, space and nutrients. This means large stands of Himalayan balsam can develop on river banks without native flora growing beneath them.
- The plant is an annual which means it dies back during winter. This can leave river banks bare and exposed, accelerating erosion and allowing sediment to enter the water.
- Balsam is a prolific nectar source. Bees visiting the balsam may not visit other plants as regularly meaning native plants may not get pollinated as often.

This leaflet gives a 3 year + guide to balsam management using the preferred method

Take Action !

- Set up a Local Action Group in your community. By working together you would be able to clear larger areas and eventually secure against future re-colonisations.
- Join one of Derbyshire Wildlife Trusts Balsam Blitz days to learn more about Himalayan balsam control and to see it in action! Come along to have fun, meet new people and help protect wildlife in Derbyshire.
- For more information visit www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk

About Derbyshire Wildlife Trust

- Derbyshire Wildlife Trust is the only conservation organisation protecting all wildlife throughout Derbyshire.
- Founded in 1962 as the Derbyshire Naturalists' Trust, we have been protecting the county's wildlife and wild places ever since.
- Derbyshire Wildlife Trust is committed towards creating living landscapes — robust, connected landscapes that address the challenges facing our wildlife today.
- From woodlands to wetlands we are dedicated to making Derbyshire a living landscape.

Join Us !

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Derbyshire
Wildlife Trust

Himalayan Balsam Management

How to control Himalayan Balsam on your land !

Control methods for Himalayan balsam

- **Pulling** - The safest, cheapest, easiest and eco-friendly method for control. Balsam is shallow rooted so is easily pulled up. Pulled plants can be composted on site (and only take a few months to rot down). This should be done away from water to prevent material being washed back into the river. Repeat visits are necessary to pull late developing plants. If the pods are releasing seed a bag can be placed over the flowers to catch seeds then emptied on the compost pile. Compost piles should then be monitored and re-growth can be dealt with quickly.
- **Cutting** - If faced with a large patch the balsam can be trimmed as close down to the ground as possible – below the first node. This should be followed up by manual pulling and further trimming if necessary usually 2-4 times a year during the growing season until no regrowth occurs. For best results—cut during flowering as earlier cuts may increase the number of flower heads.
- **Grazing** - Grazing by livestock can be effective throughout the growing season – usually April to September. However plants that are hard to reach will be missed, not all breeds of livestock eat balsam and overgrazing will reduce native flora!
- **Chemical Control** - Balsam can be treated with appropriate herbicides. However, this may harm non target native species and consent is needed from the Environment Agency if spraying near a water course. This should be a last resort.

The key to success is to keep up the control each year !

YEAR 1

Before the seed pods develop -

- Pull the Himalayan balsam plants – try to get the roots as well.
- With your hands scrunch up the plant to break the vessels in the plant stem. This lets the water out and plants break down quickly.
- Pile the plants up away from watercourses to compost. If intact plants are left on the ground they may take root again from one of the nodes.
- Keep it on site to prevent further spreading !
- Composting is the best method of disposal. Some plants may take root on the pile but piles can be monitored and any re-growth dealt with. The plant will then be confined to the compost pile location.
- The compost piles will rot down quickly.

YEAR 2

- Balsam will reappear from seeds that have been released in previous years (seeds can last for up to three years before growing). However the number of plants should be less than the previous year. Continue treatment as year 1.

YEAR 3 and on

- There should now be considerably fewer plants in this year. The same treatment as year one should be continued to prevent a rapid re-colonisation. Monitoring your site and controlling regrowth is important.



← Flower head, may be pink, purple or white. Glands in the flowers produce a sweet, sickly smell when crushed.

Ripe seed pod (2-3 cm long) →



← Large oval leaf with serrated edge and red central vein (5– 23 cm long)



↑ Pulled plant showing new red thin hairy roots growing from a node as well as at the base of the plant (roots hidden by soil).