

HIMALAYAN BALSAM – FACT SHEET



EFFECT ON THE WATERWAYS

Himalayan Balsam (*impatiens glandulifera*) is an invasive species that was introduced to Britain in the mid 19th Century by Victorian gardeners. It did not take long for the plant to escape into the wild and start growing in locations across the UK and it is now well-established on many of the country's waterways.

The plant prefers damp locations making waterway banks an ideal habitat. Himalayan Balsam grows in dense clumps and crowds out native plants before dying back in the winter. This can cause problems on waterway banks as they are left bare and susceptible to erosion. This in turn can cause navigation problems for boaters and damage waterway habitats such as fish spawning beds.

PLANT SPREAD & CONTROL

- ✓ Himalayan Balsam spreads quickly with up to 800 seeds per plant, which are released explosively from seedpods.
- ✓ Seeds can travel up to seven metres from the plant, in a waterway corridor it is likely they will land in a stream, river or canal and travel downstream to start a new colony.
- ✓ As an annual plant, it can be controlled by pulling it up before seedpods have developed and leaving it on the side of the towpath to rot.
- ✓ The plant is non-toxic making this an easy and safe task that many volunteer groups, including IWA, are now undertaking nationwide.

IDENTIFICATION LIST

- ✓ Plants can grow to over 3m in height.
- ✓ Stems are hollow and green early in the year, turning a pinky-red in the spring.
- ✓ Leaves are a shiny dark green, slender and up to 15cm long.
- ✓ Flowers appear between June and October, are slipper shaped, sweetly scented and range in colour from a purplish-pink to a very pale pink.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you are interested in helping with IWA's campaign against the invasive plant or would like more information so you can organise your own Himalayan Balsam pull, visit www.waterways.org.uk/himalayanbalsam.

WWW.WATERWAYS.ORG.UK/INVASIVESPECIES

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