

Himalayan Balsam

A non-native invasive species



What is Himalayan Balsam?

- Non-native plant introduced to the UK in the 1800's
- Found mainly along riverbanks, ditches and wet habitat
- Grows in thick patches out-muscling native plants
- Large patches may hold up river flow increasing local flood risk
- Dies back in winter leaving bare earth that is more easily eroded by river flows
- Spreads easily via exploding seedpods
- Nectar is highly attractive to insects over native plants

Lifecycle of Himalayan Balsam

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Seedlings emerge												
Foliage growth												
Flowering												
Seeds shed												
Control												

Himalayan Balsam is an annual plant in that it grows, flowers, seeds and dies back all in one year.

It is estimated that each plant can produce several hundred seeds which are expelled from their seedpods up to 7m away when they are ripe.



What to look for.

- Tall single hollow red stems
- Green serrated leaves
- Pink-purple flowers with overhanging seedpods
- Leaves grow groups of three growing off the stem at nodules (horizontal loops).

Balsam Bashing

Himalayan Balsam can be controlled by breaking the lifecycle and stopping the seeds from spreading. Pulling out the plant by hand (in a safe location with gloves) before the seedpods appear and shed is an effective method. A good time to do this is between May and June.

When removing the plant, pull-out the shallow root and snap the removed stem below its first nodule. This will prevent regrowth allowing it to be dried and composted (away from the water or riverbank to reduce risk of blockages).

It is essential not to tackle this plant once the seedpods have formed.

Gloucester City Council are organising balsam bashing events. If you are interested in volunteering or learning more please contact urban.greening@gloucester.gov.uk

Gloucester City Council

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