

What is Himalayan Balsam?

Himalayan Balsam was introduced in 1839 to Kew Gardens as a greenhouse plant, it escaped and can now be found all over the British Isles.



A few facts....

The plant grows up to 3 metres tall, producing purple-pink flowers between June and October which resemble a policeman's helmet.

A single plant can produce up to 800 seeds, 12 to 14 weeks after flowering. The seed capsules react to the slightest disturbance, exploding and projecting seeds up to 7 metres away! The seeds are buoyant in water and can easily travel and infest new areas.

Why is it a Problem?

Although Himalayan Balsam is a pretty plant, looks can be deceiving! It is a weed and grows at an alarming rate!

Here are a few reasons why we don't want it growing in our local area:

- **It grows in dense patches, preventing shorter native plants from getting enough light.**
- **Dense stands suffocate other plants so when it dies away in winter, river banks are left bare and more liable to erosion.**
- **It produces a lot of nectar which lures pollen carrying insets away from native plants.**

What can we do to stop it?

Timing is very important when removing Himalayan Balsam. Aim to remove before flowering begins at end of June to prevent the seed pods growing. A variety of different methods can be used including cutting, strimming and pulling. Plants can easily be disposed of by burning or composting (unless seed pods are present).

If you are interested in finding out more or would like to be involved in Groundwork Oldham & Rochdale's 'Balsam Bashing Campaign' this summer, please contact Graham Gibbons on 0161 624 1444.

