

## Become a volunteer and help to blitz the Balsam !

Himalayan Balsam needs to be dealt with before its seed pods mature & explode shooting seeds far & wide to start new colonies.



The plants are shallow rooted, easy to pull up & each one removed prevents 600-2500 plants next year

### What you can do

Volunteer a few hours between May & October to help one of the organised working parties pull or cut the plants below the bottom node to stop re-growth.

OR Adopt a patch.  
Let the organiser know what bit you want to take care of.

OR When you are out walking & see a plant within safe reach pull them up, root & all, & leave them to dry over a fence or bush.  
If there are no flowers, the plants can be composted.

## Why is Himalayan Balsam a serious threat to our environment?

It's beautiful, not poisonous, surely there's no problem?

- It takes all the food, space & light & overpowers native plants & grasses even brambles & nettles.
- It quickly colonizes large areas & can grow quickly up to 9 ft high.
- Bees fail to fertilise native plants because they are so attracted to the balsam.

However, in winter, when the Himalayan balsam plants die back there are no native plant roots to stabilise the riverbanks. The soil is washed away, silting up the rivers, suffocating fish eggs & invertebrates

## **Balsam in Winter**



River banks are destabilised



## **THE PINK PERIL**

Himalayan Balsam was introduced from India in the 1830s and was much admired for its large pink flower. However, with no control over its spread it now dominates almost every river course. Each plant can produce up to 2500 seeds which are viable for 2 years. The seeds spread by floating along water courses, or caught on shoes, tools, clothing, tyre treads, animal hoofs & fleece & fur

## Identification



A young Himalayan Balsam Plant showing leaves in whorls of 3, sometimes with reddish stems & midrib

Latin name: *Impatiens glandulifera*, closely related to Busy Lizzy.

Common names: Himalayan or Indian Balsam, Jac Y Neidiwr, Policeman's Helmet

- February to April: Germinates & grows rapidly. Plants vary in size between 10cms & 3 metres depending on water & nutrient availability
- June to October: Flowers appear, followed by seed pods which explode when touched, shooting the seeds up to 7metres
- Stem joints can re-root, grow & seed if left in contact with water or wet soil. So don't leave plants lying in wet areas-hang them up.
- If possible break off the root below the bottom node & leave plant & root off the ground to dry.

## Himalayan Balsam Flowers & Seed Pods



### Planning Action:

- Don't feel overwhelmed
- Any help is useful
- Start by mapping the area affected
- Make sure the land owners are happy with what is being done
- Start clearing from the source if you can. Only work where you feel safe & let people know where you are working.
- Define the outer edges of the infestation as one plant on the edge can shoot its seeds 7 metres further away, greatly enlarging the area next year
- Work inwards from the outer edges
- Clear the routes of transmission eg footpaths, streams & ditches
- Link with others

**To volunteer for an organised working party please contact:**

It is usually sensible to wear long sleeves, long trousers & gloves to protect against brambles & nettles & beasts

This project is a partnership between:

**2010 Countryside and Wildlife Act:** it is an offence to allow Himalayan Balsam to spread. Max penalty £2000

More information from:

[www.himalayanbalsamwales.co.uk](http://www.himalayanbalsamwales.co.uk)  
[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)  
[www.nonnativespecies.org](http://www.nonnativespecies.org)

Pictures courtesy of Natural Resources Wales, Non-native Species Secretariat & Gwenda Mark & Antosh Wislocki

Leaflet produced by Cymdeithas Llandudoch, St Dogmaels Community Association