

Invasive Himalayan Balsam Removal

Volunteer Opportunity!

As part of the exciting new Torridge River Restoration Project, we are looking for enthusiastic volunteers to join us Himalayan Balsam pulling! We are focusing on engaging local communities to manage this invasive plant and deliver an eradication programme in the Upper Torridge. We need volunteers throughout June to August 2019 - 2021. This is part of a wider river and riparian habitat improvement project lead by Devon Wildlife Trust.

We are appealing to anyone willing to spare some time to help tackle the spread of Himalayan Balsam. Volunteer days will be between July & August 2019-2021.

**Our volunteer days this year:
FRIDAY 23rd AUGUST 2019**

WEDNESDAY 28th AUGUST

If you would like to join us, or to register your interest for any future days, please contact us using the details below!
Details on times and locations to follow.



Removing and reducing this non-native invasive species will help to reverse the negative effects of established populations, such as reduced riverbank stability, loss of agricultural and pastureland, reduced native wildflower diversity and resources and the increase of flooding due to siltation and bank erosion.

The volunteer workdays require a basic level of fitness and will not involve heavy work or the use of tools - only gloves and wellies are required! This is a great way to achieve some positive conservation work, to have fun and to meet other local people with a common interest.

If you have Himalayan Balsam and are a landowner in the upper Torridge catchment, please get in touch using our contact details below.

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The European Agricultural Fund
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About Himalayan Balsam

Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) is a tall, annual herb found in damp habitats. The plant is also known as 'policeman's helmets' due to its shape. These plants are relatively easy to identify, particularly as a mature plant, although it can vary in appearance depending on the phase of growing season and habitat conditions.

Habitat: Most commonly found on riverbanks, along water courses, moist areas of woodland and can grow anywhere in damp conditions.

Origin: This plant is considered a non-native invasive plant to the UK, it is native to the Himalayas but first brought to Britain as a decorative garden plant introduced to Kew Gardens in the 1980's. Following its introduction it soon found its way into gardens and wild habitats. This plant is under the Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 2010. As a result, it is an offence to plant or allow this species to grow in the wild or to be sold.

Height: Can grow in excess of 2.5 meters tall.

Flower: Most commonly it has bright pink flowers (can be a pale, white or greenish) it is helmet or trumpet shaped with a sweet scent. There are often flecks of dark brown inside the flower. Flowering season is between during July—October

Leaf: Finley serrated and slender, often with a red central rib.

Seed: Seeds are concealed in a green pod, beginning as pale green and once ripe, turn black. Each flower has approximately 4—16 pods which are tightly coiled and in a droplet shape. These will pop at high speed if disturbed, allowing seeds to be dispersed up to 7 meters. A single plant can produce over 500 seeds which can remain viable in soils for up to 2 years. Seeds are dispersed by water, wildlife, machinery and people. Germination between February/March ripen late July onwards.

Stem: A hollow tall stem with a translucent appearance with dark red node marks, often slightly ribbed. The stems often changes colour throughout the season and darkens in colour to a reddish tone in summer. They make a distinctive 'snap' if broken in two and often contain a pool of water within. When cut or damaged it sends out re-growth shoots from nodes, these can root and grow.

Impacts and Issues: Out competes native species in ecologically sensitive areas, such as riverbanks. It can grow rapidly into dense stands causing heavy shade. This reduces opportunities for native plants to thrive. During the winter, these plants die back leaving soils exposed; leading to erosion, bank destabilising, siltation, flooding and reduced quality habitat for all kinds of wildlife. Rapid growth can also lead to loss of agricultural land.

Removal: Hand pulling is the preferred method as this removes the root; pulling's can be piled to dry out, away from areas which may flood to ensure any viable seeds or nodes are not washed downstream. Once pulled, it is a good idea to 'slash' or break up the tall stems to prevent side shoots and rooting from the nodes. These plants will pull up easily as the root system is shallow. Large stands can be cut or trimmed, but this does not remove the root and plants may re-root. Pulling needs to be carried out prior to seeds becoming ripe, for a minimum of 3 years (to catch any viable seed regrowth from within the soil). Cattle will graze very young shoots and help to trample and bruise seedlings to reduce vigour (consider the grazing location carefully, grazing on riverbanks may be detrimental and lead to soil erosion).

