

Himalayan Balsam

Impatiens glandulifera

Invasive: High impact

Species profile

Habitat: Terrestrial. Riverbanks, roadsides and waste ground.

Distribution in Ireland: Widespread.

Status: Established.

Family name: Balsaminaceae.

Reproduction: Seed pods explode when mature.

Identifying features

Height: Plant grows up to 3 metres (approx 10ft).

Leaves: Green and serrated, opposite leaves in whorls of 3-5 may also have reddish mid-rib.

Stem: Brownish/green hollow stems which change to a deep red colour closer to the flowering head.

Flower: Pink trumpet shaped flower with wide petals.

Roots: The plant has very shallow roots, making it very easy to pull out of the ground.

Seeds: Ripe seeds explode when touched, which sets off a reaction amongst other seeds to also explode. Seeds can be spread up to 7 metres from the parent plant.



Dense stand of Himalayan balsam in a wet woodland - c. O' Flynn

Himalayan balsam colony - Shutterstock



Himalayan Balsam

Threats

Outcompetes native species by forming dense stands.

Can raise the risk of flooding as large stands can impede the flow of a waterbody.

Seeds are easily spread by both wind and water, making it easy to colonise areas further downstream.

During the winter the plant dies back, leaving river banks vulnerable to erosion.

Similar species

Spring: Seedlings present, can be told apart from native plants by stem structure and leaf shape.

Summer: Characteristic flowers appear, making it easy to identify.

Autumn and Winter: Early autumn plant may still be in flower, further into winter hay like remains of the plant are found.

Similar species

When not in flower it may at a glance be mistaken with Himalayan knotweed (invasive).

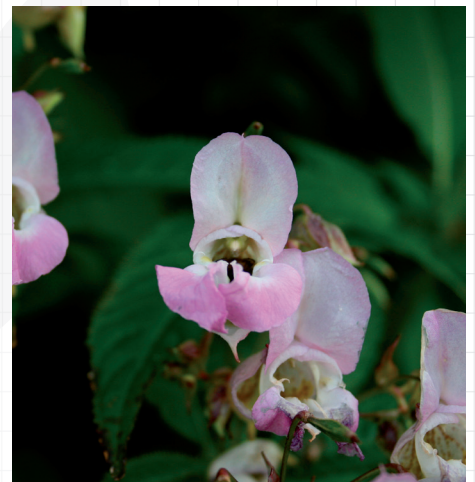
Due to the formation of dense stands, it could also be mistaken with other invasive knotweed species, if seen at a distance.

It may also be mistaken with *Scrophularia nodosa* and *Scrophularia umbrosa* two native species, which can also be found along riverbanks. Extreme care must be taken that these species are not exterminated alongside similar looking *Impatiens glandulifera*.

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Notice the red stems and seed pods of Himalayan balsam - Shutterstock



Close up of flowering heads - o. Duffy



Shallow roots make the plant extremely easy to pull from the ground - c. o' Flynn



Scrophularia umbrosa also grows along riverbanks and can appear similar to Himalayan balsam - WikiCommons

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



View Ireland's distribution of this species on <http://maps.biodiversityireland.ie>

National Biodiversity Data Centre fact sheet.
Text: Colette O' Flynn & Oisín Duffy (Version 1) November 2013.



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