

How to identify: Himalayan Balsam

Scientific name: *Impatiens glandulifera*

Origins: West and Central Himalayas

Habitat: Commonly found along riverbanks, in damp woodland, and on waste sites



Flowers

- Between July and October it produces clusters of purplish pink (or rarely white) helmet-shaped flowers.
- The flowers are followed by seed pods that open explosively when ripe.

Leaves

- Long, pointed leaves which have serrated edges
- The leaves grow in pairs or whorls of three along the stems
- Leaves often have a reddish mid-rib



Stem

- Stem is green to red early in the year, turning pink to red in the Summer
- Hollow and brittle
- Leaves and side branches grow from stem joints
- Grows up to 2m

Facts

- Spread is solely by seed dispersal - when ripe, the seed pods explode, leading to seeds falling into nearby rivers. These are then carried downstream and lead to widespread dispersal.
- Each plant can produce over 800 seeds
- It is a prolific nectar producer – our bees will often neglect native plants when Himalayan balsam is available
- Along riverbanks, dense stands can impede the water flow at times of high rainfall, increasing the likelihood of flooding
- The plant dies back in the winter, leaving bare ground. This not only looks like a muddy mess, but also leads to erosion.



In Winter