

What is Himalayan Balsam?

An invasive non-native species that inhabits riverbanks and areas of damp ground. It is native to the western Himalayas but is now invasive in many parts of continental Europe.

How did it get here?

It was originally brought into Northern Ireland as an ornamental garden plant.

What impacts does it have?

- It grows in dense stands, shading out native plants such as grasses
- Due to the lack of native plants, when the Himalayan balsam dies back, which it does every autumn, the soil is left exposed to erosion
- Dense stands along riverbanks can impede flow at times of high rainfall, increasing the likelihood of flooding
- It produces more nectar in its flowers than native species, making the plant more attractive to pollinators, resulting in less pollination of our native plant species

What does the law say about it?

Under Article 19 of the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation (1143/2014) Himalayan balsam has been identified as a Widely Spread Species in Northern Ireland and as such, landowners have to put management measures in place to reduce its coverage in NI by 50% by 2030.

How can I help?

- **Volunteer** with a local action group to help remove invasive species such as Himalayan balsam
- **Record your sightings**

If you see any Himalayan balsam, take a photo and submit a record to CEDaR or via the iRecord app.



GUIDE TO BALSAM BASHING



Before you begin

Make sure you have permission:

- Before proceeding, always get the landowner's permission

Stay safe:

- Be aware of your surroundings - look out for cars, livestock and water
- Wear gloves, long sleeves and trousers to avoid stings from nearby nettles and to protect yourself from ticks

How to Balsam Bash

Balsam bashing is a term often used for the manual control of Himalayan balsam by pulling out of the ground.

- Only pull Himalayan Balsam **prior to the formation of the seed pods** which explode at the slightest disturbance when ripe, adding to the spread
- Flowering and seed formation may vary from season to season and between sites, so always make sure to check the stage of growth before you start
- Himalayan balsam has very shallow roots making uprooting by hand easy and satisfying!
- The pulling technique must be undertaken so that the **whole plant is uprooted**
- Pull from **low down on the plant**
- If snapping occurs at a node, the pulling must be completed to **include the roots**
- Snap the stem between the lowest node and the root - this helps prevent regrowth
- **Make a pile** with your uprooted plants where they can be left to air dry and decompose
- It is best to pile the uprooted plants on a membrane to prevent the plants rerooting

Identifying Himalayan Balsam



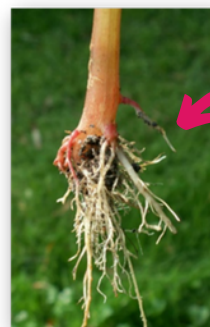
Pink (rarely white) trumpet shaped flowers, 2.5 - 4cm wide



Explosive seed pods, approx. 2.5cm long



Hollow, sappy stem. Green-red colour in spring, turning to pink-red in summer



Long slender leaves with serrated edges and reddish mid-rib. Grow opposite or in whorls of 3-5

Short roots with distinctive structure



Always remember to:

CHECK

Check your clothing, footwear and any equipment for seeds/plant material before you leave the site

CLEAN

Clean off any mud or plant material as they may be carrying seeds

DRY

Dry off your clothing, footwear and equipment before next use