

Himalayan balsam

Impatiens glandulifera



Identification

- Annual that can grow to 2.5 m tall
- Hollow succulent stem, usually tinged red
- Leaves about 15 cm long with serrated edges and usually in pairs, may be tinged with red
- Distinctive hooded flowers that are pale pink to purple and scented
- Seed pods explode to spread the seeds



Himalayan balsam. Photo M. Hutchison



Himalayan balsam flowers Photo: J. Sullivan

Where is it found?

Himalayan balsam thrives in damp conditions and can tolerate shade. It has been planted in gardens and has been found growing wild along streams and in wetland areas. Overseas Himalayan balsam is a serious problem along water margins; in New Zealand we have the chance to stop it before it spreads further.

Why is it a problem?

Because it grows quickly and can form dense stands, Himalayan balsam can displace low-growing vegetation and change the habitat of native species. The seeds can spread in water, which makes waterway margins vulnerable.

What can you do?

If you have Himalayan balsam in your garden, consider removing it, particularly if it is near a pond or creek. If it is found growing wild, pass the information on to your local DOC office.

Control

Himalayan balsam is easy to pull out; ideally this work should be carried out before it flowers. Extreme care is needed to ensure all seed pods are disposed of in your domestic rubbish and not composted. Because Himalayan balsam is often found near water, herbicide control can be difficult.



Himalayan balsam Photo: T. Belton