

HIMALAYAN BALSAM

Impatiens glandulifera

May 2017



KEY INFORMATION

Preferred Habitat: Damp or wet disturbed areas along river banks and in wooded areas.

Wandle Distribution:

Croydon Sutton Merton Wandsworth



Recommended Control: Hand-pulling

Other Options: Strimming, foliar spraying

Biosecurity: Do not attempt control when seed pods are ripe. Always clean all equipment and PPE worn on site before leaving - Check Clean Dry protocol.



Wandle Strategy: Tackle and clear this species from the upstream sources working down towards the Thames working with volunteers and other landowners.

SPECIES INFORMATION

Origin: West and Central Himalayas, introduced into Britain in 1839.

Biology: Seeds are dispersed by exploding seed pods, propelling seeds between 3-5 m from the parent plant. If these land in water, they can be transported much further downstream.

HB seeds germinate after a chilling period over 45 days at 4°C and can germinate while floating. Within 12 weeks of germination HB produces flowers, flowering can last until late September and stretch well into October.

The fruits ripen a few weeks after being formed. The setting of seed can continue well into November as a result of the protracted germination period consequently prolonging flowering periods.

A single plant can quickly dominate a new site, producing between 800 to 2000 seeds. The seeds are normally viable for 1-2 years in the soil and therefore monitoring and follow up treatments are essential.

IMPACTS ON THE WANDLE

Balsam dies back in winter, leaving bare soil exposed. Large stands of HB can therefore contribute to bank instability and exacerbate erosion.

Where large stands of HB persist on the banks of the Wandle, there is an increased sediment input into the river. In slow moving waters, this silt will accumulate and smother the river bed, rendering the habitat unsuitable for fish spawning.

HB is insect pollinated and produces a large amount of nectar over a prolonged season, making it highly attractive to insects. There is concern that this may result in decreased pollination for other native plants.

HB has strong allelopathic effects, meaning the roots release substances that inhibit germination and growth in other plant species.

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RECOMMENDED CONTROL: HAND-PULLING

Equipment:	PPE
Qualifications:	None
PPE:	Gloves, waders/wellingtons, clothing to protect from nettles & spiny plants
Time of Year:	May to late October (where fruit has not developed)

Method:

Hand-pulling Himalayan balsam can begin as soon as plants have been correctly identified and are strong enough so that the stems do not to snap.

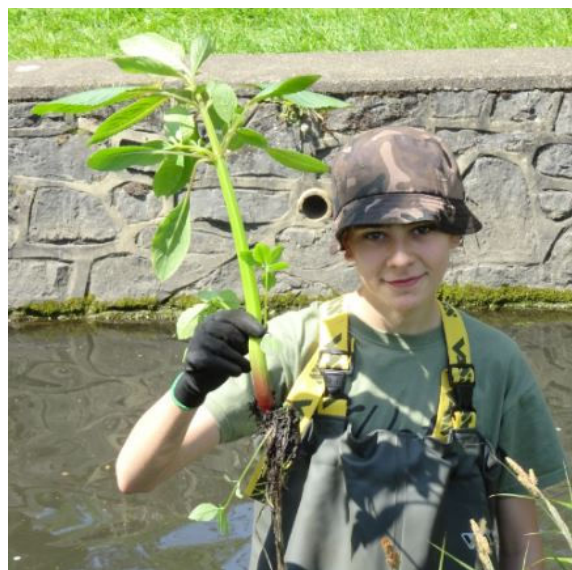
Identified stands of balsam should be tackled in early May. Plants at this stage will be of varied ages.

Pull the large, more robust plants first. The weaker, smaller plants will be tackled at follow up visits.

Grasp the stem as low down as possible and pull upwards in a perpendicular motion to avoid snapping the stem. The plants should be lifted roots and all.

Snap the roots off the removed plants below the first node and stack roots and stems in a single pile away from the edge of the water and allow to decompose in situ.

After the initial clearing, the site must be revisited every 3 weeks, pulling the strongest plants first each time. Delayed germination can permit hand pulling to continue until the end of October on a site where fruit has not developed.



OTHER CONTROL OPTIONS

Foliar Spraying: For inaccessible/awkward stands of balsam. EA approval required!

Strimming: For large stands of balsam.

You will find the information sheets on these control methods in the Control folder



Living Wandle
Landscape Partnership

