



INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES

Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) aka Policeman's Helmet, Poor Man's Orchid, Touch-Me-Not

SK Provincial Designation: None *

Overview:

The Himalayan balsam is an annual plant native to the Himalayan region of Asia. It was introduced to North America in the early 1800s as an ornamental plant and as a hitchhiker in the ballast water of ships. This plant is highly invasive, particularly in riparian areas and wetlands. Its growth rate is impressive for an annual, with some plants reaching up to 3 metres tall.

Reproducing aggressively by seed, each plant is capable of producing up to 800 seeds that can be viable for up to two years and have been known to germinate under water. When disturbed or touched, mature seed pods explode and are able to catapult their seeds up to 7 meters away.

The Himalayan balsam flowers between June and October and its glands produce large quantities of a sweet-smelling nectar. Both the nectar and the plant's long flowering period attract pollinators and draws them away from surrounding native plants.

*While this plant is not currently regulated in Saskatchewan, it is considered invasive and should be managed as such.



Flowers

PHOTO: ArtMechanic, Wikipedia.org

Habitat:

Himalayan balsam thrives in nutrient-rich, moist, natural areas such as river banks, wetlands and riparian zones. It is tolerant of partial shade, but is sensitive to frost and intolerant of drought conditions.



PHOTO: Jan Samanek, State Phytosanitary Administration, Bugwood.org

Identification:

Stems: Purple- or red-tinged hexagonal stems that can grow 1 to 3 metres tall. Stems are smooth, hairless and hollow and are easily broken.

Leaves: Leaves are 5 to 20 centimetres long and lance-shaped, growing opposite or in threes. Leaf edges are sharply serrated. Crushed foliage has a strong musty smell.

Flowers: Flowers are pink, with a hooded shape, and grow in clusters of 5 to 10 flowers per stem. The plant has a long flowering period, from approximately June to October.

Seed: Seed pods are 2 to 3 centimetres long and explode when disturbed. Each plant is able to produce up to 800 seeds.

Prevention:

Himalayan balsam was introduced to Saskatchewan as an



Leaves

PHOTO: JMnolf, Wikipedia.org

ornamental planting that has since escaped into a natural area. Do not purchase or grow Himalayan balsam. If removing this plant, ensure proper steps are taken for disposal, site re-vegetation, monitoring and after-care. For additional

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Himalayan Balsam (continued)

Control:

Grazing: In Britain, sheep and cattle have been known to graze Himalayan balsam without ill effects. Invasive plants should not be considered as forage.

Cultivation: Cultivation is not practical in riparian areas, where this plant tends to invade.

Mechanical: Cutting may be difficult in riparian areas but may be effective if repeated and/or used alongside other treatments. Himalayan balsam can grow new flowering stems after cutting. Hand pulling is relatively easy due to the plant's poor root structure and may be the only option near water.

Chemical: Pesticide application in riparian areas requires certified pesticide applicators and must meet provincial Codes of Practice. The use of pesticides in any manner not published on the label or registered under the Minor Use of Pesticides regulation constitutes an offence under both the Federal Pest Control Products Act and provincial acts in Saskatchewan. For the latest information on pesticides for agricultural use in Saskatchewan, please consult the provincial Guide To Crop Protection produced annually by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture or consult your local Ministry of Agriculture representative.

Biological: In 2006, the Centre for Agricultural Bioscience International (CABI) conducted surveys in the plant's native range to identify potential biological control agents. One natural enemy, a fungus, was quarantined for further safety testing in 2010 and the project is ongoing. Currently, there is no biological control for Himalayan balsam available in Canada.



Roots

PHOTO: Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org



Leaves

PHOTO: Michael Shephard, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org



Seedlings

PHOTO: Jan Samanek, State Phytosanitary Administration, Bugwood.org

Sources:

Aggressive Ornamentals: Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*). British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture. www.agf.gov.bc.ca

Biological Control of Himalayan Balsam. Centre for Agricultural Bioscience International. 2013. www.cabi.org

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Seeds

PHOTO: Jan Samanek, State Phytosanitary Administration, Bugwood.org