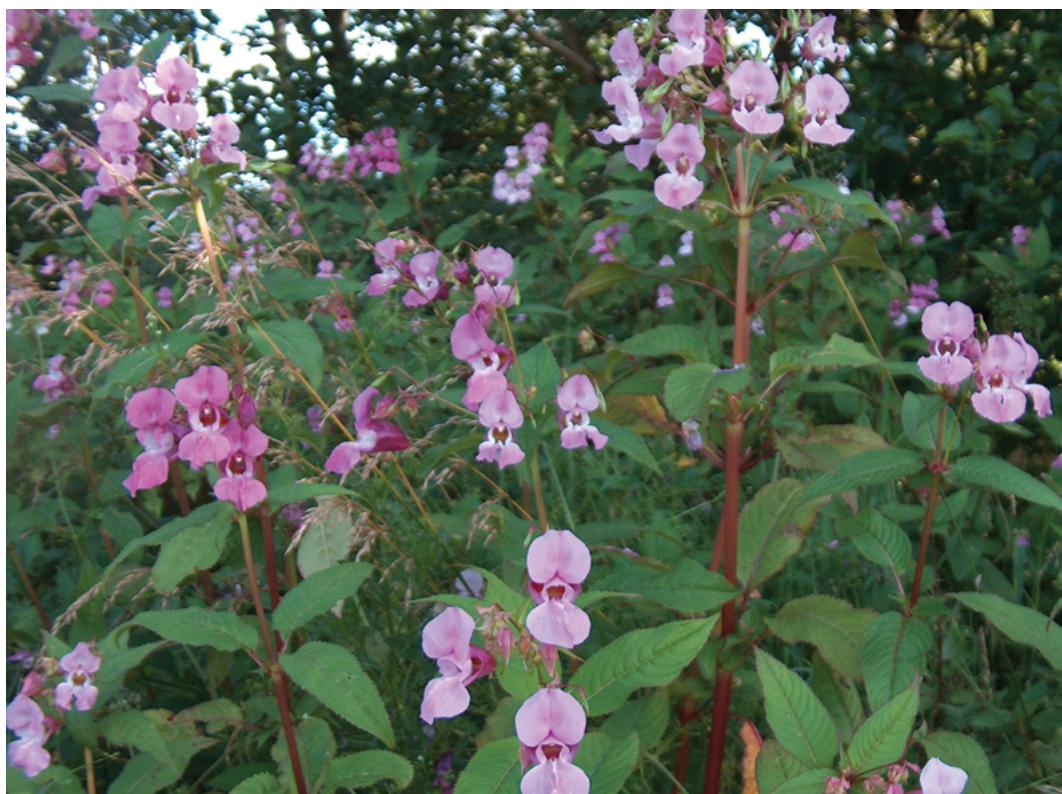


Himalayan Balsam

(*Impatiens glandulifera*)



This species is also known as Indian Balsam and Policeman's Helmet. It is an annual species that produces tall red/green sappy brittle stalks which can achieve heights of 1-2 metres in the wild. A number of leaves will be arranged around nodal points. These are generally slender to elliptical with finely serrated edges. Around 2-3 months after seed germination the plant will produce masses of attractive flowers. These are trumpet-like shapes with colour variations ranging from very pale almost white to various shades of pink and purple. It is often known for its exploding seed heads, which enable effective seed dispersal away from the main plant. Each specimen can produce several hundred seeds that are known to remain viable for up to 2 years.

This plant is not frost hardy and dies back immediately in low temperatures, stems degrade quickly, often leaving little residue for identification purposes in the winter months.

Himalayan Balsam is now widespread in the UK, especially along urban rivers and watercourses. It spreads solely by seeds, which float so are often carried on waterways being deposited on banks downstream where it then quickly populates. Out-competes native species and when present in high density and can result in erosion of the river banks during winter months.

Typical growth phases of species

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Seed Germination Period				Rapid Plant Growth		Flowering/Seed Production & Dispersal			Plant Dies with First Frost & Quickly Decays		

Main Problems

This species typically demonstrates a rapid rate of spread within suitable environments. Soils containing viable seeds are classified as controlled waste under the current Waste Management Licensing Regulations Act 1994.

The dense coverage damages the environment by reducing biodiversity (flora and fauna) by shading out. When it dies back over the winter months river banks are left bare and liable to erosion.

Himalayan Balsam Images



Similar Species



Rosebay Willowherb



Impatiens variety



Himalayan knotweed