

Himalayan Balsam

Impatiens glandulifera

Plants · In flower Jul–Oct · an invasive species



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A tall, fast-growing annual with hollow reddish jointed stems, whorled toothed leaves and large hooded pink-purple flowers shaped like a policeman's helmet. Introduced from the Himalayas as a garden plant in the nineteenth century, it now forms dense stands along the Nith and its tributaries and on damp waste ground around Dumfries.

BEHAVIOUR

Ripe seed capsules explode at a touch, flinging seed up to seven metres — and into the water, which carries it downstream, so a single upstream plant can seed an entire catchment. It grows faster and taller than native riverbank plants and shades them out, then dies back completely in winter, leaving bare soil that erodes into the river. Control means pulling it before it seeds.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Balsams (Balsaminaceae)
HEIGHT	Up to 2.5 m
STATUS	Invasive non-native; illegal to plant or cause to grow in the wild

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