



IMPRESS THE CHESS HIMALAYAN BALSAM

Please help us to wipe out this weed in Chesham!



Why Himalayan balsam is a problem weed:

Himalayan balsam, *Impatiens glandulifera*, was introduced to Britain in 1839, but escaped from gardens into the wild. It prefers moist soils, and rapidly colonises riverbanks. Himalayan balsam develops into dense stands that kill off native plants and other flora. When these annual plants die back in autumn, it leaves riverbanks bare and prone to erosion.

A single plant can produce 2,500 seeds and the explosive seed pods can throw the seeds over 6 metres away from the plant. Seeds are transported by rivers to establish new colonies downstream. Himalayan balsam has already become a big problem on other chalk streams in the UK, such as the Frome, Kennet and Avon.

HIMALAYAN BALSAM AND THE LAW

The responsibility for the control of Himalayan balsam rests with the landowner or tenant of the land.

It is **against the law** to plant Himalayan balsam or cause it to grow in the wild.

Please look out for Himalayan balsam and control it on your land

Himalayan balsam has been recorded at several sites along the Chess in Chesham and is spreading, but the populations are small enough at the moment for it to be controlled. Himalayan balsam does not form a persistent seedbank in the soil, so populations can be wiped out after 2 to 3 years of consistent control. But if nothing is done stands can get so large that control becomes very expensive and all the while, seeds are spreading downstream causing new populations to establish.

What does it look like?

Flowers	Present from June to October, pink in colour, on long stalks, slipper shaped – giving the plant its common names of “policeman’s helmet” and “bee bums”
Stems	Pinky-red in colour, grows up to 3 metres tall, hollow and jointed, brittle
Leaves	Long (up to 15 cm) and spear-shaped, serrated edges, dark green and shiny
Seeds	Produced between July and October, white, brown or black in colour, 4 to 7 mm in diameter

How to control it

It is easiest to control Himalayan balsam by pulling up the plants **before** they flower. The plants can then be burnt or composted. **Do not** pull up or compost plants which are flowering, this can help to spread the seeds.

You can mow/trim or cut plants at ground level before the flowering stage in June. **Do not** cut earlier as this causes vigorous re-growth and more flowering.

Himalayan balsam can be grazed by cattle or sheep from April throughout the growing season.

Pulling, mowing, strimming, cutting and grazing should be carried out until no more growth occurs.

Herbicides, including glyphosate, can be used for control. You must contact the Environment Agency (General Enquiries line: 03708 506 506) before using herbicides near the river.

For more information on Impress the Chess, contact the Town Hall on 01494 774842.