

HIMALAYAN BALSAM



Himalayan balsam in flower



Serrated leaves

How to recognise this plant

Size:

- An annual growing to a height of 0.5-2.5 m.

Flowers:

- Pinkish-white or purple flowers that grow in racemes.
- The flowers are 2.5-4 cm in size, flecked on the inside.

Leaves:

- Serrated, opposite leaves or whorls of 3 to 5 leaves around the stem.
- The leaves have knot-shaped, red glands in the leaf axils and red dots on the serrated leaf tips.

Stems:

- Long, ribbed stems with wide nodes.

Growth and flowering:

- The sepal on the underside is pouch-shaped and presents a short, dark, recurved spur from which visiting insects such as bumblebees can collect nectar. By doing so the insects pollinate the flowers.
- Strongly fragrant flowers that bloom from July to October.
- After flowering, forms seed capsules which burst open triggered by touch, ejecting the seeds.



Red axils

What to do if you come across this plant

Report it to your supervisor or customer

- (and via the VERA app or via waarneming.nl)

Prevent stems and seeds from dispersing or getting into the water

- when working near sites where Himalayan balsam is growing.

Check and clean clothing and machines

- after work.

Avoid touching the plants

- to prevent the seed capsules from bursting open.



Himalayan balsam in flower

How to prevent spreading

- Prevent the plant from setting seed: Remove the plant before it flowers.
- Do not leave plant remnants behind: remove them carefully.



Himalayan balsam stem

Why is this plant a problem?

Himalayan balsam:

is a threat to native plant and animal species

- With their strong fragrance, the plants attract pollinators such as bees away from native plants, causing them to produce fewer seeds and spread less effectively.
- They outcompete native plants and fauna due to their explosive growth.

is a risk to water safety

- Himalayan balsam stops other plant and grass species from thriving on banks. It is an annual, so when it dies back in the autumn the banks are left bare and prone to erosion. Restoration of banks is costly.

has a strong survival instinct

- One Himalayan balsam plant can produce up to 2,500 to 4,000 seeds. The seeds are contained in capsules. When a ripe capsule is touched, it bursts open and ejects the seeds. The plant is therefore also known as 'Touch-me-not'. The seeds can travel up to 7 m from the plant, or much greater distances in water.
- The seeds of Himalayan balsam have a high germination rate, with 80% growing into new plants.
- Stems that are mown back can regrow and flower.



A pouch-shaped sepal

This project has been made possible with funding from the Knowledge and Innovation Agenda for Agriculture, Water and Food. **Questions? info@dreevers.nl**



Scan the QR code for more information or visit invasieve-exoten.info

