

# Himalayan Balsam

(*Impatiens glandulifera*)



**Habitat:** Terrestrial.  
**Family name:** Balsaminaceae



Rapid coverage in a single season



**Description:** Common names for Himalayan Balsam include:- Policeman's Helmet, Bobby Tops, Copper Tops, and Gnome's Hatstand all originate from the flowers being decidedly hat-shaped.



Flower (resembles a hat)

Himalayan balsam grows rapidly and spreads quickly. From seed it can grow up to 2.5 metres high in a single season, absorbing fertiliser and water intended for crops. Seeds germinate from March and develop rapidly, growing into dense upright stands smothering native plants

typically grows to 1 to 2 m high, with a soft green or red-tinged stem, and lanceolate leaves 5 to 23 cm long.



Pink or purple Flowers

The crushed foliage has a strong musty smell. Below the leaf stems the plant has glands that produce a sticky, sweet-smelling, and edible nectar. The flowers can vary between white, pink and purple, with colouration differing among individuals within the same habitat. They have a hooded shape, 3 to 4 cm tall and 2 cm broad. Each flower has 5 petals

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The leaves of the Himalayan balsam are dark green, lance-shaped and have sharply serrated edges. Leaves are 5-18cm long and range in width from 3-7cm



Himalayan balsam Leaves

The fruit capsules are green and contain many spherical seeds (which may be green or brown), eventually becoming black

when they are mature. The combination of its high rate of reproduction and large size facilitates rapid colonisation.



Fruit Capsules

Himalayan Balsam also promotes river bank erosion due to the plant dying back over winter, leaving the bank unprotected from flooding.



Plant dies back in winter exposed ground to erosion



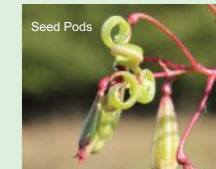
Himalayan balsam is frequently found along river banks

**Reproduction:** After flowering between June and October, the plant forms seed pods (up to 2,500 seeds per plant) 2 to 3 cm long and 8 mm broad, which explode when disturbed, scattering the seeds up to 7 metres from the mother plant.

Seeds can remain viable for up to 18 months and are readily dispersed by wind or in water. The aggressive seed dispersal, coupled with high nectar production which attracts pollinators,



Mature Seeds



Seed Pods

often allows the Himalayan Balsam to out-compete native plants.

Stems are pinkish-red, brittle and hollow with side branches originating from joints. Stems are translucent and succulent.



Hollow succulent stems