

Tackling Himalayan balsam: Don't ignore it!

If you see Himalayan balsam in the countryside, near a river or on a road verge, you can cut or pull it up (see below). Likewise on your own land, or you could graze it with livestock. Himalayan balsam is not poisonous. For help to tackle it, find a local Himalayan balsam community action group or start your own group.

Himalayan balsam is easy to pull up as its roots are weak and shallow



Volunteers pulling Himalayan balsam



Careful no seeds escape



Hear seeds popping in the bag

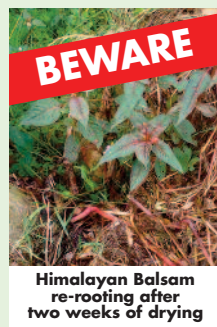


In public spaces, have lookouts, protect the public

Pulling Method

- Pull the whole plant with all its roots.
- Best to pull before flowers and seeds appear.
- If possible break stem up and break off root.
- Pile it up and leave to rot or hang up on branches and leave to dry.
- Check piles after a couple of weeks for any Himalayan balsam re-rooting or flowering.
- Repeated monthly pulls brings rapid success.

Warning: Himalayan balsam left in damp places can re-root from every node and then re-flower and seed.



Himalayan Balsam re-rooting after two weeks of drying

Dealing with Flowering and Seeding Balsam

Video link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjijjVQUODMs>

- Gently bend the flower and seed head into a sturdy plastic bag
- Break the flowers and seeds into the bag.
- Keep bagged flowers and seeds on site to rot in the bags for at least three years.

Warning: If taken away from the site of origin, balsam and associated materials e.g. soil, become controlled waste (and must be disposed of at a landfill site that is authorised to accept it).

Mechanical Methods

- Himalayan Balsam does not regrow if cut below the bottom node (see picture on page 1).
- If cut above the bottom node, plants go into overdrive, re-grow and produce lots of seed.
- Large areas can be brush-cut, flailed, scythed or slashed.
- Even one low cut in the first season will greatly reduce seed production. This gives you time to plan how to deal with an area.
- Monitor the site monthly to catch new and missed plants.

Warnings:

Have appropriate training and protective equipment.

If Japanese knotweed is present do not strim.

Less than 0.7 grams of Japanese knotweed can regrow.

Clean yourself and all tools on site to prevent seed spread.

How quickly can you make a difference? Very!



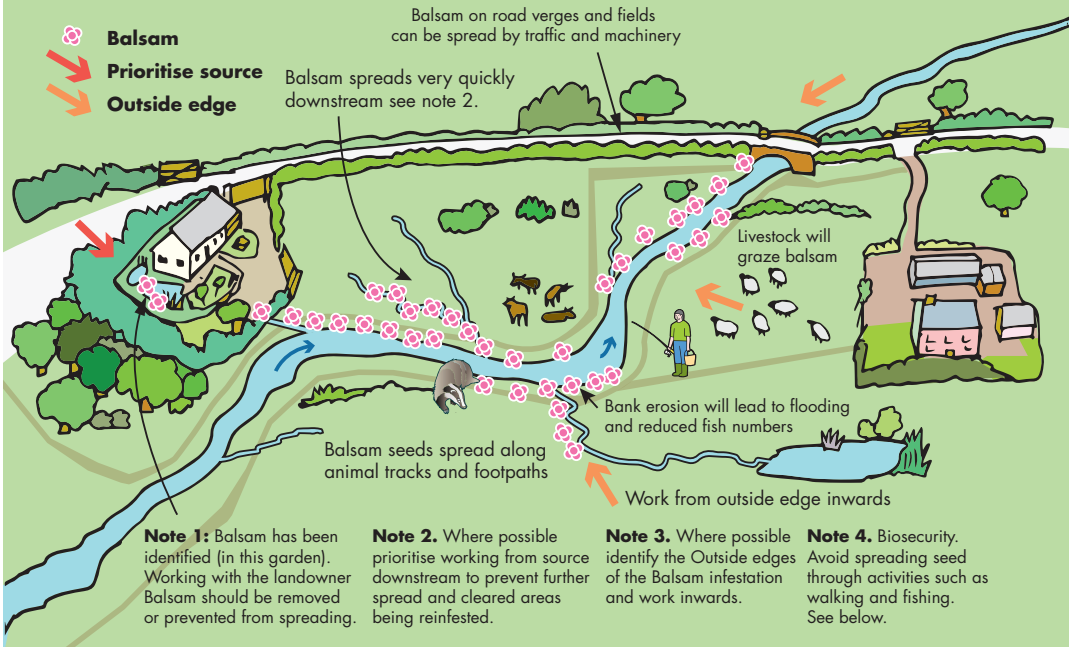
May 2011 verges of young balsam



May 2012 balsam banished

On some flood-free sites you can get rid of most Himalayan balsam in a year. The verge above (left) was brush-cut in late May. Newly germinated plants were pulled every month until October. The next year grass and native wildflowers returned. Occasional monitoring continues.

Take steps to prevent Himalayan Balsam spreading or get rid of it.



Know what you grow
Invasive plants can take over your pond or garden and damage the environment.

Stop the spread by not moving pond plants around.

Compost with care
Don't dump aquatic plants in the wild – you could be breaking the law.



Check your equipment and clothing for live organisms – particularly in areas that are damp or hard to inspect.



Clean and wash all equipment, footwear and clothing thoroughly. If you do come across any organisms, leave them at the water body where you found them.



Dry all equipment and clothing – some species can live for many days in moist conditions. Make sure you don't transfer water elsewhere.

YOU can make a difference!

These strategies helped St Dogmaels Community Association clear 50 acres of Himalayan balsam, including difficult areas of marsh, cliffs, blackthorn and dumps.



Sections of horse mats used to float on marsh



Tree surgeons abseiled cliffs (on their own insurance)



Horse mat used to 'surf' bramble and blackthorn



Spraying where access is dangerous e.g. dumps. Have appropriate training and protective equipment.

For more information contact your local Keep Wales Tidy officer www.keepwalestidy.org.
For information on species identification, alerts and biodiversity visit www.nonnativespecies.org.

1. Work with landowners to find an acceptable approach.
2. Put up posters and submit newspaper items to let people know what is being done.
3. Invite new volunteers to join in e.g. at local events and farmers' markets.
4. Limit most working parties to a few hours. Do not over-work volunteers.
5. Do repeat sweeps of the area monthly. This is usually quick and satisfying.
6. Provide plenty of fluids and treats. Celebrate achievements with social events, e.g. barbecues.

General balsam treatment timings will depend on locality

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Grazing												
Cutting/Pulling												
Bag Seeds — Follow guidelines												
Spraying — useful in unsafe areas												

Report Himalayan balsam infestations online

If you see a balsam infestation, report it to the West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre at www.wwbic.org.uk/wildlife-recording.

This leaflet was compiled as part of Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority's *Stitch in Time* project, with Pembrokeshire Rivers Trust and St Dogmaels Community Association. *Stitch in Time* is funded by the Sustainable Development Fund and administered by the Park Authority. For further information visit www.nonnativespecies.org.



Larger print version
www.pembrokeshire-coast.wales

Himalayan balsam is in the Natural Resources Wales 'top ten most destructive and costly invasive species' list. Under the Countryside & Wildlife Act it is an offence 'to plant or otherwise cause Himalayan balsam to grow in the wild.'