

# TOOLBOX TALKS



## HIMALAYAN BALSAM

### WHAT?

The tallest annual plant now growing in the British Isles, Himalayan Balsam was introduced to the UK 150 years ago as an ornamental plant but quickly spread into the wild.

Himalayan Balsam thrives because each plant produces more than 500 seeds before it dies in the Autumn.

When the seed pods are ripe, the slightest touch causes them to burst open catapulting and dispersing the seeds up to 7m away.

They are often found growing along rivers, disused railway lines or in similar linear corridors.



### WHY?

#### AVOID ENVIRONMENTAL HARM:

As one of the most invasive species in the British Isles, Himalayan Balsam dominates habitats, grows densely and shades out native plants. Biodiversity is affected as the consequent loss in plant diversity leads to a reduction in the population of insects and birds.

#### AVOID ENVIRONMENTAL HARM:

Dead stems washed into and clogging up watercourses cause an increased risk of flooding.

## IDENTIFICATION

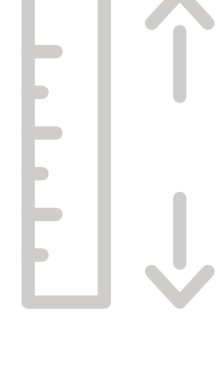
Himalayan Balsam grows up to 2.5m tall.

The stem is pinky red, hollow, sappy and brittle.

Leaves occur in two's or three's from the same point on the stem, are spear shaped with serrated edges, shiny and dark green with a reddish mid-rib.

Flowers, which are similar to a Foxglove, are purplish pink, carried on long stalks and appear from June to October.

Seed pods, which are brown / black are produced from August to October.



UP TO  
2.5 M



JUNE  
TO  
OCT

### DO

Stop work in the immediate area and contact your manager for instruction if you think you have identified Himalayan Balsam on your site.

### DON'T

**DON'T** disturb the seedpods

**DON'T** move soil that may contain seeds or other plant materials without specific instructions.

TOOLBOX  
TALKS



FOR MORE INFORMATION OR IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS CONTACT **YOUR SHEQ DEPARTMENT**