



# Tool Box Talk

Focus on Performance

## Himalayan Balsam

Sust. 25

### What?

Himalayan balsam is a non-native species introduced as an ornamental plant in the nineteenth century. It is common alongside riverbanks and canals, road and rail embankments.

Himalayan balsam grows during the spring and dies back in the autumn. It has pinky-red stems and dark green pointed leaves with serrated edges. Bright pink clusters of flowers are produced between June and October and emit a distinctive musky scent. Each plant may produce up to 500 seeds in green seed pods produced from August through to October. When ripe, the seed pods burst open when touched, through vibration or from wind motion, scattering the seeds up to 7 metres from the plant.

### Why?

Himalayan balsam outcompetes native plant species and its dead stems contribute to increasing flood risk. Himalayan balsam is listed in legislation as an invasive species. It is illegal to spread it or cause it to grow in the wild.

### How?

- Do not disturb Himalayan balsam by tracking through it. Note that plant movements in the vicinity of stands may cause seed pods to burst. If possible fence off with a signed exclusion zone.
- If Himalayan balsam is known to be within or adjacent to a work area, do not clear vegetation or excavate within its vicinity unless you have been briefed on the Himalayan balsam management plan or method statement for correct methods handling and disposal.
- Do not undertake any hand-pulling of Himalayan balsam while it is in seed; this may result in wider dispersal of seeds.
- Do not apply herbicides to Himalayan balsam adjacent to watercourses unless you have a licence to do this.
- Stop work immediately within 7m of any identified stand. Report any discoveries of Himalayan balsam after works have started to your supervisor or the site management team.



Pictures: Non-Native Species Secretariat

### Questions

1. How might you identify Himalayan balsam?
2. Why is Himalayan balsam a problem on construction sites?
3. Before working in a Himalayan balsam area, what would you need to be briefed on?

If you have any queries regarding the content of this tool box talk please contact your Sustainability Advisor or Line Manager.