

TIPS and REMINDERS

- ▶ Do not sow or plant Himalayan balsam in your garden or anywhere in nature.
- ▶ The purchase, sale, growing, distribution (including passing on to neighbours) and allowing the growth of Himalayan balsam is forbidden in all of Europe!
- ▶ The pulling up and mowing of Himalayan balsam is completely safe.
- ▶ Compost the pulled plants in your garden.
- ▶ Do not bring the pulled plants or soil with seeds outside of your garden.
- ▶ When pulling or mowing the growing area check the periphery in order to locate all plants.
- ▶ Examine the growing area even several years after destroying the plants, so to quickly eliminate any remaining plants.

For more information: www.keskkonnaamet.ee

REPORT GROWING SITES OF HIMALAYAN BALSAM

by writing to: info@keskkonnaamet.ee
(include photos of the plants), or record it in the public nature observation database at:
lva.keskkonnainfo.ee

Author: Eike Vunk
Photo credits: Eike Vunk, Tarmo Mihkelsaar, Elina Leiner, Tarmo Niitla
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RESPONSIBILITY / LEGALITY

The bringing in or release of any invasive species to the natural environment is strictly forbidden. Since October 2004, it is forbidden to bring and to grow Himalayan balsam in Estonia, and as of July 2017, the growing, reproducing, exchanging and transporting of the species is forbidden throughout all of the European Union. Since 2019, the sale of the plant is also forbidden.

Thus, land owners are required to control Himalayan balsam plants on their properties in order to protect Estonian native species and their habitats.

Control

The plants will disappear from the growing site within 2 to 3 years, as long as no seeds are allowed to ripen.

HAND-PULLING – if there are a relatively small number of plants, or if the landscape is difficult and the growing site is small, the simplest and most effective way of removing the plants is by pulling them up by hand. The pulling should start at the beginning of July and continue in approximately one month intervals until the first frost, not allowing for any seeds to ripen. With smaller numbers of plants they should be placed somewhere to dry out (not on damp soil) and then be composted. With larger masses, gather them into a large pile until the next spring. The mass and size of the piles will decrease significantly when drying.



MOWING – use In the case of larger growing sites and mowable landscapes. Mowing should be repeated several times so as not to allow any seeds to ripen. The best is to keep it very low, if possible. The outer boundaries of the site should be carefully inspected, so that all plants are mowed or pulled up.
Freshly pulled or mowed plants should not be relocated from the garden or growing site – this could cause the spreading of the plant!



Himalayan balsam in Estonia



REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
ENVIRONMENTAL BOARD



Balsam plants (of the genus *Impatiens*) in Estonia

There are between 850-1000 species of plants belonging to the genus *Impatiens*, which include annual and perennial herbs as well as some woody plants. Worldwide, 17 species are considered problematic. In Europe, Himalayan balsam is considered to be one of the most dangerous. Three species of *Impatiens* can be found in Estonian nature.

YELLOW BALSAM

(*Impatiens noli-tangere*) – is the only species native to Estonia. It grows in wet forests, shady and damp mixed forests, along river banks and amongst bushes.



- ▶ **Height** – 20-80 cm
- ▶ **Flower colour** – yellow, with red spots
- ▶ **Flower length** – 2-3.5 cm
- ▶ **Leaf peculiarities** – leaf blade elliptic-ovate, shortly pointed, with a bluntly toothed edge, rounded at the base

SMALL BALSAM

(*Impatiens parviflora*) – is an invasive non-native species in Estonia, growing naturally in East Asia and Siberia. It grows in almost all habitats, but generally does not form dense patches. The species is thought to have been introduced to the Tartu Botanical Gardens in 1827.



- ▶ **Height** – 10-80 cm
- ▶ **Flower colour** – upper petal yellow, lateral petals light to whitish yellow
- ▶ **Flower length** – ca. 1 cm
- ▶ **Leaf peculiarities** – blade ovate to elliptic with dense sharp noded teeth, cuneate base



HIMALAYAN BALSAM

(*Impatiens glandulifera*) – is an invasive alien species in Estonia, native to India and the Himalayas. Grows in forests, parks, on the banks of water bodies, at roadsides and on waste lands, and forms large and dense colonies.

- ▶ **Height** – 50-300 cm
- ▶ **Flower colour** – pinkish-purple, occasionally white or dark purple
- ▶ **Flower length** – 2.5-4 cm
- ▶ **Leaf peculiarities** – blade elliptic-ovate with sharp tip, densely toothed edge, in whorls of 3

Other species of balsams can also be found in the garden plants market (for example Garden balsam (*Impatiens balsamine*) and Busy Lizzie (*I. sultanii*)), which are popular decorative plants and which can be occasionally found growing wild near gardens, parks and wastelands.



Himalayan balsam

This species, native to the Himalayas and India, was first brought to Europe (Great Britain) in 1839 as a decorative garden plant, and started to spread massively in the early 20th century. By now it is one of the most invasive alien plant species in Europe. It is also invasive – pushing out other native species – in Asia, North America and New Zealand, and is considered to be a plant threatening biodiversity around the whole world. Because the Himalayan balsam reproduces quickly, can grow to be quite tall, blossoms from June till October and the flowers are very decorative, it is a very common plant among gardeners.

The Himalayan balsam's preferred habitats are the banks of water bodies, disturbed areas (wasteland and clear-cut areas), yards and parks. In favourable conditions (adequate dampness and partly shaded) it can form very dense and large colonies, preventing other species from growing. One plant can create up to 2500-4000 seeds, which can spread up to five metres from the mother plant, making it a quickly reproducing and spreading species.

This plant is an annual whose seeds are preserved in the soil for 1-2 years. It has very shallow roots (making them easy to pull up), the stem is easily broken and it can re-root easily in damp soil.



Distribution

As an invasive alien species the Himalayan balsam is spread across all the continents except Antarctica. The species grows in all European countries and causes problems mostly in terms of endangering local biodiversity.

The distribution of Himalayan balsam has explosively increased in Estonia over the last 15 years and if control measures are not started, it will become massive throughout the country. By the end of 2019, an area covering approximately 200 hectares of invasive plants has been mapped (approx. 140 sites). The largest site in terms of area covered is located in Viljandi county, the most numbers of sites are in Harju county.

