

Urban Invaders Invasive Alien Species

Have you seen these aliens in Norfolk?

Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)

Description: An annual herb with bright pink-purple, trumpet-shaped flowers, fleshy stem and explosive seed heads.

Where to look: Prefers to grow in damp areas, and is particularly abundant on river banks where it out-competes native vegetation

Why is it a problem? Die back in winter leaves river banks bare and susceptible to erosion.



(Credit : GBNSS)

Floating pennywort (*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*)

Description: This aquatic plant has characteristic, kidney-shaped leaves which can be free-floating or emergent. It has fleshy stems and fine, white roots.

Where to look: Emergent or floating on the surface of still or slowly moving freshwater.

Why is it a problem? With a peak growth rate of 20cm per day, floating pennywort can rapidly dominate a water body!



(Credit : Broads Authority)

Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)

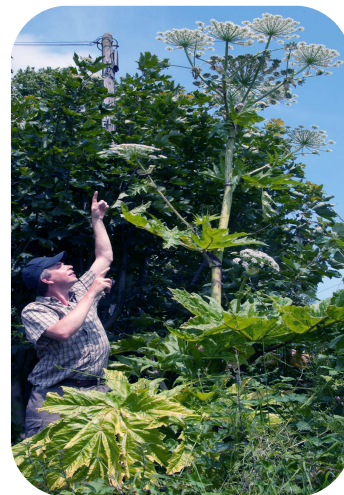
Description: Large plant with umbrella-shaped flowers and sharply divided leaves, growing up to 5m tall. The stems are usually covered with sharp bristles, and have distinctive purple patches. Each flower can release up to 50,000 seeds!

Where to look: Found in a variety of habitats, but common on riverbanks and roadside verges.

Why is it a problem? The poisonous sap of this plant can blister skin.



(Credit : Olaf Booy)



(Credit : GBNSS)

New Zealand pigmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*)

Description: Aquatic perennial with small yellow-green, succulent leaves and solitary white flowers.

Where to look: Still or slow flowing freshwater. The plant also has a terrestrial phenotype that can be found around ponds and lake margins.

Why is it a problem? Forms very dense mats that can choke waterways, impede drainage and cause flooding.



(Credit : GBNSS)

Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*)

Description: Tall herbaceous perennial with bamboo like stems covered with purple speckles. The shield-shaped leaves are 10-15cm long with a flat base. White flowers in late summer.

Where to look: Widespread throughout the UK. Often found in or adjacent to, brown-field sites and along river banks.

Why is it a problem? The root system and strong growth of this plant can damage foundations. Dense colonies crowd out other herbaceous species.



(Credit : Mike Sutton-Croft)

Tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)

Description: A tree with large pinnate leaves each consisting of around 11-25 pairs of leaflets reaching 7-12cm in length. Flowers are a yellowish green to red in colour. When broken, twigs have a distinctive unpleasant odour.

Where to look: Urban areas such as railway banks, waste ground and parks.

Why is it a problem? Extensive growth can damage sewers, pavements and building foundations. Sap is mildly toxic and can cause inflammation of the skin.



(Credit : Luis Fernández García)

Find out more: www.rinse-europe.eu