

Invasive plant facts

Japanese knotweed

Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) was first brought to Britain in the mid-19th century as an ornamental garden plant. Since then it has caused serious problems in a range of habitats – particularly roadsides, riverbanks and derelict land – by displacing native flora and even causing structural damage. In the early spring red/purple shoots grow rapidly, forming canes, with leaves gradually unfurling and turning green. The plants are fully grown by early summer and mature canes are hollow with a distinctive purple speckle, forming dense stands up to 3 metres high.



Giant hogweed

A highly invasive, large member of the carrot family, brought in as an ornamental plant from south-eastern Europe, giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) looks like giant cow parsley with deeply divided, light green spiky leaves. Its sap is highly toxic and can cause serious skin damage. It appears in March as a rosette of leaves and as the season progresses, a stout stem, often with purplish blotches, pushes up to a height of perhaps 5 metres in July. Each plant can produce up to 50,000 seeds which can survive for up to 15 years. Colonised banks of watercourses are likely to erode more rapidly than those protected by native species.



Himalayan balsam

Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) is a native of the western Himalayas. Introduced to Britain in 1839, it escaped from gardens and rapidly colonised riverbanks and areas of damp ground, growing up to 3 metres high. The purplish-pink to white slipper-shaped flowers appear in June. When the seed pods mature, they explode when touched, scattering the seed up to 7 metres away. Seeds are also spread by water and may remain viable for up to two years.

