

War on Balsam!

Himalayan Balsam is an invasive plant which is obviously not native to this country. Introduced in 1839, it has now spread to most parts of Britain and poses a threat to our biodiversity because it tolerates low light levels and forms a carpet which blankets out all other plants. Bees love it as it has high nectar levels and they will literally make a bee-line for a clump of Balsam, which ensures that it is pollinated and forms seeds. If it is allowed to continue to spread unhindered, evidence suggests that areas which are now rich in native flora will become expanses of nothing but Himalayan Balsam.



The good news is that it can be removed with a bit of well-timed effort and in some areas of the country it has been entirely eradicated. We have colonies of it along the Wharfe and we are trying to co-ordinate with other clubs so that their members will also be out on the same days to try and clear a stretch of the river bank.

It is a shallow-rooted annual so pulling it up is the best way to get rid of it, ideally before the flowers open or well before seed pods have time to form. The plants can then be left where they lie and will just compost down. Once the seeds have developed, it should be left where it is, because the seeds explode when ripe and a tall (10 foot) plant can shoot up to 800 of them as far as 22 feet. This is how it spreads down the river.

The two days for waging War on Balsam on the river are **Saturday 26 May** and **Saturday 30 June**. We will also be sending a press release to the Gazette to ask walkers and members of the public if they would pull up any plants they see, to help the eradication process.

If you are fishing on the river and see it growing, do pull a few plants up whilst you are down there.

Saturday 26 May and Saturday 30 June – meet at the suspension bridge at 10.00 a.m.

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