

WEED OF THE WEEK- HIMALAYAN BALSAM

Identification

Also called Poor Man's Orchid and Policeman's Helmet, this plant was introduced as an ornamental. It is an annual plant which only reproduces by seed, prefers very moist soils and is frequently seen around rivers, lakes, ponds and marshes. The root system is very shallow which can lead to bank erosion, lowering the water quality of the nearby water body

Flower

This flower is large and purple to pink in colour. The flowers occur in clusters of four or five.

Leaves

Green with red mid vein and serrated with glands. They are arranged oppositely or in threes.

Stem

Stem has a purple-tinge in spring, and is hairless. Stems are hollow and grow up to 3 m (10 ft) tall at maturity

Seed

700-800 seeds per medium plant are explosively released from seed pods when disturbed and can be flung as far as five meters and even when completely soaked.

Control

Do not handle or attempt to rid this weed when seed pods appear. Control should be done shortly before or during early blooming. For small patches, pull the weed by hand and include its root. For large patches, mow at ground level. Do not compost any invasive plants. Dispose removed plant material together with regular household waste.

