



A Statement from the BBKA

HIMALAYAN BALSAM

Himalayan Balsam is undoubtedly much visited by bees, both bumble and honey bees. Other insects are also very attracted to this important late source of nectar and pollen. In some locations it may be the only forage source of any significance late in the year and can be crucial in helping honey bees provision their colonies to survive overwinter.

From a biodiversity and conservation point of view a balance has to be struck between helping sustain insect populations with balsam and other species, and the consequential food chain benefits to birds, bats and mammals, and the obliteration of native plant communities by large stands of balsam (a non-native species).

It is unacceptable (actually illegal) to actively distribute balsam seeds to encourage its spread, but this does not preclude the option for beekeepers to have some balsam in their gardens to provide the late nectar and pollen whilst carefully managing it so it does not spread to other gardens, agricultural land and especially watercourses. Its presence also makes river banks more susceptible to erosion after it dies back in the autumn.

The critical thing is to cut it down before the first seeds develop and mature even though it is still flowering. The seed pods are explosive and will scatter the seeds several metres from the plant. Then don't put the dead plants in the compost bin but chop them up and bury them in the soil to a depth of at least 2 spade spits. This should prevent any seeds germinating next year.

If it is proposed to use herbicide alongside a watercourse you must contact the Environment Agency.

Himalayan balsam is not a notifiable or injurious weed, but it is invasive and a non-native (alien) species.

[Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) is also known as Indian Balsam, Policeman's helmet, Jumping Jacks, Nuns, Bee-Bums and Poor Man's Orchid.

Water Balsam is another species named *Hydrocera trifolia*].

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Chair BBKA Technical & Environmental Committee: July 2011

