

Impatiens glandulifera

COMMON NAMES

Himalayan balsam

BIOSTATUS

Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Tall leafy herb dying overwinter and re-establishing from seed the following spring, up to 2.5 m tall, with thick succulent, often red-coloured angular or round stems, hollow stems, leaves in pairs or threes up to 20 cm long with a long pointed tip and finely toothed, leaves have distinctive unpleasant smell when crushed, flowers showy, purplish pink or occasionally white, up to 4 cm long in large flower heads of up to 10 long stalked flowers.

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, Violet/Purple, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Annual, glabrous herb; stems erect, single but branched above, to c. 2.5 m high, succulent, ribbed, swollen at nodes. Petioles to c. 8 cm long, pink above, narrowly winged, with scattered purplish elongated glands in distal 1/2. Lvs opposite or in whorls of c. 3. Lamina 10-20 × 3-8 cm, lanceolate to ovate, sharply serrate; veins impressed above, raised below; base cuneate or attenuate; apex acuminate. Fls in diffuse cymes in upper lf axils of branches, shining. Bracts and lateral sepals 5-10 mm long, ovate, pink, acuminate. Posterior sepal forming large backwards projecting hood 2.2-3 cm long (excluding spur), pink or rose with dark spots inside; spur 5-7 mm long, rather stout, green. Corolla 2-lipped, white or pale pink; uppermost petal 1.5-2 cm long, subreniform; apex truncate to slightly emarginate; lateral petals very asymmetric, c. 3.5 cm long when stretched out, sharply bent in middle with lower halves forming a circular orifice enclosing the elongated anther mass. Anthers yellow. Capsule 2-3 cm long, usually purplish on exposed side, constricted in upper 1/2, with 5 acute ridges. Seed 3.5-5 mm long, ± broadly ovoid, shining black, with a single ridge down 1 side; base truncate; apex slightly beaked.

SIMILAR TAXA

Unlikely to be mistaken for any other plant.

DISTRIBUTION

Local and scattered throughout including Stewart Island, common in parts of Westland and in the vicinity of several North Island urban centres.

HABITAT

Margins of water bodies, especially gullies, wet roadsides and forest margins.



Silverstream, Upper Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 29/12/2006, Licence: CC BY.



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GENUS

Impatiens

FAMILY

Balsaminaceae

AUTHORITY

Impatiens glandulifera Royle

FLOWERING

November to March

FRUITING

November to March

YEAR NATURALISED

1909

ORIGIN

Himalayas

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental plant

CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Rarely controlled, but can be controlled manually, mechanically or herbicidally depending on situation.

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Seed dispersed by water and contaminated machinery, garden discards. Seed capsule 2-3 cm long, usually purplish on exposed side, constricted in upper 1/2 with 5 acute ridges. Seed 3.5-5 mm long, more or less broadly ovoid, shining black, with a single ridge down one side; base truncate; apex slightly beaked. (Webb et al 1988)

ETYMOLOGY

impatiens: From the Latin impatiens 'impatient, hasty', referring perhaps to the manner in which the pods of some species explode (Johnson and Smith, 1986).

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED (2024)

This plant is named in a list of 386 environmental weeds in New Zealand 2024 prepared by DOC. 759 candidate species were considered for inclusion on this new comprehensive list of environmental weeds in New Zealand. The species considered were drawn from published lists of weed species, lists of plants that must be reported or managed by law if observed, existing national and regional programmes and agreements for pest management, and species already managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). Candidate species were then assessed to see if they were fully naturalised and whether they have more than minor impacts in natural ecosystems. Read the full report [here](#).

NVS CODE

IMPGLA

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Webb, C.J.; Sykes, W.R.; Garnock-Jones, P.J. (1988). Flora of New Zealand Volume 4: Naturalised pteridophytes, gymnosperms, dicotyledons. Botany Division, DSIR, Christchurch.

Popay et al (2010). An illustrated guide to common weeds of New Zealand, third edition. NZ Plant Protection Society Inc, 416pp.

Clapham, A.R.; Tutin, T.G.; Warburg, E.F. (1962). Flora of the British Isles. Cambridge University Press, Second Edition. 1269pp.

Johnson, A. T. and Smith, H. A (1986). Plant Names Simplified: Their pronunciation, derivation and meaning. Landsman Bookshop Ltd: Buckenhill, UK.

ATTRIBUTION

Factsheets prepared by Paul Champion and Deborah Hofstra (NIWA). Features description from Webb et al., (1988). Some of this factsheet information is derived from [Flora of New Zealand Online](#) and is used under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand](#) licence.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/impatiens-glandulifera/>

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