

THE WILDLIFE ROAD SHOW

INVASIVES SURVEY

Floating Pennywort

Hydrocotyle ranunculoides



Floating Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*) is an aggressive, invasive, N American free-floating or rooted aquatic perennial capable of rapidly forming dense stands on the surface of ponds, canals and ditches, typically completely suppressing other aquatic flora.

The characteristic leaves and growth form help to make this plant easy to identify. It can grow up to 20cm per day and may quickly dominate a waterbody forming thick mats.

First recorded in Birmingham & Black Country in 2004 (from the duck pond at Sandwell Valley and in ditches by the River Rea). Parts of the Wyrley & Essington and Stourbridge canals were particularly badly affected and further colonisation was reported annually from pools and ditches across the region.

Red Alert status is given for this species and it is very important any sightings are reported. Recently, however, it may be retreating at some sites, possibly due to the application of effective control measures and/or a series of cold winters.

The leaves may be floating or submerged.

They are shiny, and kidney-shaped with a crinkled edge and they are often wider than they are long.



Canal covered with Floating Pennywort

Not to be confused with...



Marsh Pennywort

Hydrocotyle vulgaris
Leaves are round and complete, not kidney-shaped.

Japanese Knotweed

Fallopia japonica



Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) is the most invasive species of plant in Britain and it spreads extremely quickly, preventing native vegetation from growing.

It was first brought to Britain in the mid-19th century as an ornamental garden plant. It is a large rhizomatous, thicket-forming perennial herb, common throughout Birmingham & Black Country where it is an aggressive invader of waste places, unused gardens, neglected public open spaces, railway land and the banks of water courses.

It is lush green in colour, with shield shaped leaves and white flowers around September or October. The stem is bamboo like in appearance and can grow by 10cm a day.

The thickets shade out the existing vegetation and it is therefore of conservation concern. Strenuous efforts are being made (late 2000s) to control this species using herbicides. Successful in open and semi-shade, favoured by shelter and deep, moist to damp, fertile soil.

Still appears to be fairly uncommon in the countryside areas of Walsall and Sutton, and in the peripheral areas generally, but otherwise ubiquitous.



Not to be confused with...

Giant Knotweed

Fallopia sachalinensis
Larger leaves. Less common than Japanese Knotweed.



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Not to be confused with...

Hogweed

Heraclium sphondylium
Hogweed which grows up to 2m, sometimes 3m with smaller flower heads, 5 to 20cm across.

Not to be confused with...

Orange Balsam

Impatiens capensis
which has orange flowers and grows up to 1.5m tall.



Flower is orange in colour

Giant Hogweed



Flower is white or sometimes pinkish

Umbrella-shaped flower



Stems usually have sharp bristles

Blotchy or rarely continuous purple

Giant Hogweed (*Heraclium mantegazzianum*), is a native of the Caucasus mountains and was introduced to Britain in 1893 as an ornamental plant. It escaped from gardens and now colonies of this very large, distinctive, perennial herb from SW Asia can be found on waste ground, along banks of streams and rivers and in derelict gardens in open and partially-shaded sites, usually in richly fertile and fairly base-rich, moist to damp soils.

Prolific seeding can result in large localised populations forming when left undisturbed, and it can in this way spread quite rapidly along roads and rivers. An extensive forest of Giant Hogweed once dominated the land on which the new Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Edgbaston now stands. The plant is quite intensively controlled, and under the Wildlife & Countryside Act of 1981 it is an offence to 'plant or otherwise cause Giant Hogweed to grow' in the wild.



Contact with any part of this plant must be avoided as even minute amounts of sap can cause blistering of the skin following exposure to sunlight.

Himalayan Balsam



Flowers are sweetly-scented

Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) is a tall annual, forming continuous stands along streams and river banks in damp woodland and also in more open situations on base and nutrient-rich soils and muds, frequently invading and often dominating old Alder and Willow carr woodlands.

Also, less vigorously, on waste ground and gardens in drier soils. These latter habitats seem to be invaded more vigorously in wet seasons, and can act as "staging posts" for the colonisation of new damp woodland areas, although it mainly travels down river and along canal corridors. Viewed with mixed feelings in Birmingham & Black Country.

Its gaudy, large pink to purple, sickly-sweet smelling flowers are a cheery sight along the banks of some otherwise dreary urban water courses in the late Summer. It grows fast and can reach 2 to 3 metres in height. The plant can produce large quantities of seed in exploding capsules that can throw seed several metres. 'Himalayan Balsam Bashing' by Natural History Societies and local groups is a regular task for those who regard Himalayan Balsam as an aggressive, rampant species shading out more choice native plants. It was introduced into Britain in the 19th century.



Leaves are slender to elliptical with finely-serrated edges.

Up to 15cm long

Flowers are pink (rarely white) often with spots and markings inside.

What are Invasive Plants?

Several types of plant can become invasive weeds. They are either native species that grow well in disturbed or nutrient-enriched conditions, to the detriment of other plant and animal species, or non-native plants that have been introduced to this country by accident or as a consequence of trade or deliberate collection. Not all non-native species become weeds, but if they do, they become very difficult to control.

There are four basic methods of controlling weeds: mechanical, chemical, natural and environmental. Mechanical control includes cultivation, hoeing, pulling, cutting, raking, dredging or other methods to uproot or cut weeds. Chemical control uses specific herbicides. Natural control uses pests and diseases of the target weed to weaken it and prevent it from becoming a nuisance. Environmental control works by altering the environment to make it less suitable for weed growth.

Successful management of alien invasive species requires an understanding of how they grow and also the ecology of the aquatic systems in which they occur.

Things you can do to help control Invasive Plants

Ways to help prevent the spread of invasive plants:

- know what you are buying – avoid plants or seeds known to be invasive and choose plants that are suitable for your garden or pond
- compost carefully – dispose of all plant waste responsibly
- help to stop the spread – be careful when swapping plants
- join in with local initiatives

Further information can be found on <http://beplantwise.direct.gov.uk/index.html>

Help STOP the invasive spread on the Wyrley & Essington Canal

Volunteers are needed at various locations along the Wyrley and Essington Canal between May and September 2011 and throughout 2012, working two to three days a month including weekends where necessary. Volunteers need to be physically fit as they will be required to walk sections of the canal as part of the monitoring. In return they will enjoy the opportunity to gain skills and experience in ecological surveying and the satisfaction of helping their local canal. It is also a chance to socialise with like-minded individuals and to learn more about the work of British Waterways and the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust.

Please contact Sarah French on 01827 252097 or volunteer@britishwaterways.co.uk for further information or to register your interest.

Information sources: nonnativespecies.org, direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/InYourHome/PestAndWeedControl/DG_10037530, beplantwise.direct.gov.uk/index.html, environment-agency.gov.uk/business/sectors/default.aspx, environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/wildlife/31350.aspx

With thanks to Prof. Ian C. Trueman and Mike Poulton for providing text for each species (in extracts of The Atlas of the Flora of Birmingham and The Black Country in prep.).

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