

**Aims:**

Learn and practice some techniques in surveying and recording plants.

You will need:

- Printed copies of the “Alien plant survey sheet” per group (p2 below)
- Clipboards and pencils
- Tape measure
- Way to record a grid reference (GPS unit, OS Locate app or map)
- A camera if you want to take photos

Preparatory work:

- Identify a suitable outdoor location to take the group to. This site could have clumps of plants you know are invasive species or just be a place with patches of different plants present which you can measure.
- Identify your “invasive plants” - If you can find a patch of invasive plants e.g. Himalayan balsam or Japanese knotweed that would be brilliant - but it’s not essential. You could use a patch of heather, bracken, a group of small trees or shrubs as an example instead.
- Ideally find a place with several different patches in one area so you can split the class into small groups, and each can work on a different patch. If that’s not possible get the group to measure different sections of a bigger patch – you can add up the recorded areas later!

Explain:

Once we find an alien plant species in an area the first things we want to know about it is how much there is of it, how far it has spread and where it is – so we undertake a **survey**.

Once we have done a survey (and this might extend to check a wider area, like a whole river or burn or an area above and below the original site) and established the type, coverage and quantity of the plants we can plan to go back and control them at the appropriate time of year and using the right methods.

Instructions:

1. Show the group the patches of invasive plants (or substitute plants) you have found.
2. Get the groups to complete the survey sheet recording lots of information about the invasive plant and the patch of plants in general.

Do more:

We use surveys like this for native plants as well as alien or invasive species. Try doing the survey in different places to build up a picture of the areas of different plants in a wood, the playground or gardens of parks nearby.

If you know the plants you’ve recorded you could submit them to a database like iRecord - <https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/> - (See Activity Sheet 6.3 – Wildlife Recording).

Handy notes:

Download the free **OS Locate** App to a smart phone – this will tell you your grid reference wherever you are stood.

<https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/shop/os-locate>

Another handy app that will identify any plant / animal for you using the smart phone camera is the **Seek App** by iNaturalist.

Giant hogweed is an invasive non-native plant. It also has toxic sap which burns the skin - so make sure you do not have the group in touch with this particular species!

Survey Details

Surveyor name(s) _____

Date of survey _____

Location (place name) _____ Grid Reference _____

The invasive plant

1. Plant name (if known) _____

2. Measure how tall the plant is.

Plant height _____

3. Draw a picture of the leaf and flower of your plant and measure the size of the leaf / flower. If there is no flower draw and measure the stem instead.

Leaf

Leaf size _____

Flower

Flower size _____

The area of plants

4. What area do these plants cover? Measure the length and width of the area where the plants are present to work this out.

Length of patch _____ Width of patch _____ Area (length x width) _____

5. Are there other plants growing in this area? Either underneath or next to the invasive plants. Yes/No

Can you name any of them? _____

6. Did you see any wildlife (insects etc) on the invasive plants? Yes/No

Can you identify what you saw? _____

6. Do these plants look like they are spreading and taking over? Yes/No