

**Aims:**

Undertake some practical conservation work and contribute to improving your local environment.

**You will need:**

- Work gloves
- Outdoor clothes and shoes

**Finding some Himalayan balsam:**

The only one of the common invasive plants that is safe and easy for groups and in general to remove by hand is **Himalayan balsam**.

To remove other invasive species like **Giant hogweed** or **Japanese knotweed** specialist equipment and chemical pesticides are needed, therefore, manual removal should not be attempted.

If you've found a nearby patch of Himalayan balsam – great! Double check you've got your identification correct (see link on right) and make sure you have landowner permission to work at the location.

If you don't know where there is any – ask your local Fishery Trust (see Alien Detectives Additional Information page to find out who this is). They might be able to tell you where there is some close to you and may even come and help!

**Handy notes:**

Himalayan balsam is not hazardous, but we recommend wearing gloves and washing your hands when you have finished the activity.

[Himalayan balsam ID guide](#)**Repeat visits**

After you have cleared an area of Himalayan balsam you'll have made some open space - and more balsam may grow up later in the year. You can go back and repeat the activity multiple times within a year and or over a few years until you finally get rid of it all. Keep at it!

**Instructions:****Pulling Himalayan balsam**

**Note:** Himalayan balsam should only be pulled before it starts to seed (usually mid-July onwards) so ideally pull between April – June.

1. Pull the plant up by grasping the base of the stem and giving a steady gentle pull. It comes up easily and should bring the shallow roots with it.
2. Hang the pulled plant over a tree branch or fence line so the roots don't touch the ground. Alternatively, create a big pile of balsam (it'll compost down). This stops the balsam re-growing from the roots or the nodules on the stem.

That's it! See who can make the biggest pile, who can pull the tallest plant or who pulls the most plants!

3. Do your biosecurity checks – clean your boots as you leave the site in case bits of plant or seed are stuck in them. You don't want to spread the invasive Himalayan balsam to a new site!

**Do more:**

Share your success! Take some photos of your group pulling Himalayan balsam, write an article and share them in newsletters or on social media (don't forget to tag in @SISI\_project / Scottish Invasive Species Initiative or send to us by email [sisi@nature.scot](mailto:sisi@nature.scot)). You could be the inspiration others need to also go out and get stuck into Himalayan balsam.