

**The Project** is working to control invasive non-native plants in the Lower Ness catchment, between Glenurquhart and the eastern fringe of Inverness. Those that cause the most problems are:

- Himalayan balsam
- Japanese knotweed
- Giant hogweed
- White butterbur.

These plants mainly occur along watercourses, road verges and on waste ground. They all invade natural habitats and suppress native plants. This causes a loss of biodiversity and may also increase bank erosion.

With the help and cooperation of landowners, a team of contractors and volunteers will be controlling these plants over the next few summers. Most of the work is undertaken by cutting, but some species require the application of herbicide.

It is important to control these plants at a catchment scale, and to continue with treatments and monitoring for several years.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

Highland is one of the least 'contaminated' parts of UK as regards invasive non-native plants. Controlling 'black-spots' for these plants in Lower Ness will help to maintain this enviable status.

Most introductions of non-native plants have started because they have escaped into the wild from gardens. You can help prevent the spread of these plants in a number of ways:

- allow the Project access for monitoring and control
- notify us if you find plants we may have overlooked
- maintain a wild buffer zone along watercourses
- avoid planting invasive species in your garden
- dispose of garden waste responsibly



# Lower Ness Invasive Non-Native Plants Project

**For further information, visit:**

<http://www.scottishnativewoods.org.uk/index.asp?Im=75>

<https://www.secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/>

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## What are Invasive Non-Native Plants?

About 10000 years ago, after the last Ice Age, plants and animals gradually re-colonised Scotland as the climate changed. The term **native** is used to describe those species which established themselves naturally during this period.

Most animals and plants that have settled in Scotland in the last few hundred years have been introduced by man. These are known as **non-native species**.

Not all non-native species cause problems, of course. In fact, it is only a minority that spread rapidly into the wider countryside, where they can have serious negative impacts on our native wildlife, our health and our economy. These are **invasive non-native species**.

Most invasive non-native plants were introduced as ornamental garden plants, and subsequently jumped over the garden wall into the wild. Many of these species most readily invade disturbed habitats, such as wasteland, floodplains and riverbanks. They are often spread by running water.

*Space invaders: all Invasive non-native plants impact on natural ecosystems by displacing native plants*



## Why are they a problem?

Invasive non-native plants can affect us in a number of ways. They may:

- have a major impact on our native wildlife
- increase the risk of bank erosion and flooding
- reduce the amenity value of our countryside
- directly impact on human health
- have significant adverse economic impacts

**Himalayan balsam** is an extremely invasive plant. Since its introduction in 1839, it has spread throughout UK. Balsam thrives on moist fertile soils along watercourses. It grows up to 2.5m tall and is reputed to be the tallest annual plant in Europe. Himalayan balsam produces showy pink flowers from June until the first frosts. Each plant can produce 800 seeds. The seed-capsules explode when touched, throwing seeds up to 8 metres. These are transported by water, allowing balsam to spread very rapidly along rivers, burns and ditches. Himalayan balsam outcompetes native vegetation. It is also very attractive to insects, so reducing the pollination of native flowers.



Because it is an annual, it is possible to control balsam without using chemicals. Grazing, cutting or uprooting plants prevents them from setting seed. Treatments must be repeated every few weeks through the summer.

**White butterbur** occurs in colonies along watercourses and road-verges. It flowers in February, then develops large leaves which smother native plants. It can be controlled with herbicide.



**Giant hogweed** can reach a height of 5 metres at maturity, after 3-4 years of growth. The flower-head can be 80cms across. One plant can produce up to 50000 seeds, and the seeds remain viable for 5 years. It grows best on riverbanks and waste ground.

Giant hogweed poses a health risk because its sap can cause severe blisters. It can be controlled by cutting through the tap root or by spraying with herbicide.



**Japanese knotweed** is a perennial which can form tall, impenetrable thickets. It does not set viable seed, but spreads vegetatively by rhizomes which can extend up to 20 metres from the parent plant.

Japanese knotweed is regarded as such a serious pest that it affects property values. It is generally treated by repeated spraying with herbicide.



“ invasive non-native species cost the UK economy £2 billion every year ”