

Problem Plants

Plants which have been introduced from other parts of the world can become invasive – outcompeting our native flora and becoming a problem. Here are a few you might see while out on the riverbanks.

For detailed guides, visit the [GB Non Native Secretariat website](#)



Himalayan Balsam

Originally introduced from India, Himalayan Balsam has spread rapidly along our river banks, reducing biodiversity and increasing bank erosion.

Recognise it: by its pink-purple flowers, fleshy stem and characteristic serrated-edged leaves.

Japanese Knotweed is highly invasive and dominates native wildlife. It increases river bank erosion, and can seriously damage buildings as it is tough enough to grow through concrete!

Recognise it: by its flat-based leaves in an alternating pattern and forming zig zag shaped branches. Stems are a speckled purple colour.

Important Note: Japanese Knotweed can be spread by the movement of a tiny fragment – if you see it, DO NOT try to remove it!



Japanese Knotweed

Giant Hogweed out-competes native flora, causes bank erosion and increases flood risk. It also causes serious burns to the skin.

Recognise it: mainly by its size - it can grow to 5m tall! It has white, umbrella-shaped flowers and sharply divided leaves up to 3m wide.

Important Note: Even minute amounts of sap can cause burns to the skin - DO NOT touch!



Giant hogweed

Problem Plants



Floating Pennywort

Introduced in 1990 after being discarded from garden ponds, Floating Pennywort can grow up to 20cm a day and is therefore spreading rapidly! It can quickly dominate, forming thick mats and stopping water flow. It blocks out light and causes deoxygenation – preventing fish and insects from living in the water.

Recognise it: by its shiny, kidney-shaped leaves with a crinkled edge, growing in or on the water.

Curly Waterweed overwhelms ponds, outcompetes native vegetation and chokes up waterways, exacerbating flood risk. It is still widely sold as an aquarium and garden pond plant and the UK population is most likely due to deliberate or accidental release.

Recognise it: by its strongly curled leaves which grow in a spiral around the stem.



Curly Waterweed



Filamentous Algae

Though not necessarily non-native, the growth of Filamentous Algae tends to be the result of human activity, as unnaturally large inputs of nutrients favours algal blooms. This algae outcompetes other species and depletes oxygen levels, threatening fish and invertebrate species.

Recognise it: by its dense growths of thin, hair-like strands floating under or on the surface, growing from underwater plants and rocks.

Tips:

- As a general rule, don't touch invasive plant species. They can be easily spread and are sometimes damaging to our health.
- The information in this guide has been sourced from the [GB Non Native Secretariat website](#). Here you can find information on the identification of a wide range of invasive non-native species.