

Grow Me Instead

Invasive Plants and Safe Alternatives



Invasive Plant

Himalayan Balsam, also known as Policeman's Helmet (*Impatiens glandiflora*)

Native to the Himalayan Mountain range, it was introduced to Europe and North America in the 1800s as a garden plant. It has since escaped cultivation to become a threat to riparian areas by aggressively out-competing native plants. It is an annual plant, with pink orchid shaped flowers and long, thin leaves.

Since this plant is an annual, it has shallow roots which die back every fall and can cause erosion issues by replacing perennial native plants with stronger, deeper roots that hold the soil much better on river banks and lake edges. It is also called a 'touch-me-not' because of its seed capsules that explode when touched, launching seeds up to 5 m away. It is still sold in some nurseries, however, there is a beautiful native species from the same family, that can be purchased instead.



Safe Alternative

Jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*)

Native to Ontario, Jewelweed is related to Himalayan Balsam and can grow in similar habitats. It is a self-seeding annual, which will form large shrub-like clumps. It has yellow-gold orchid-shaped flowers with reddish spots and coarsely toothed oval leaves. It also forms brittle seed capsules which will explode when touched to launch the seeds a distance away. Used in traditional medicine, Jewelweed stems contain watery sap that can soothe skin irritation caused by poison ivy. The Jewelweed name comes from the leaves, which have a silvery jewel-like sheen when submerged in water. It will grow in partial to full shade, in consistently wet or moist soil, and prefers soil that is rich in organic matter. This plant can be a little bit more difficult to find in nurseries, but Bleeding Heart (*Dicentra spectabilis*) is easily found—another fabulous alternative to Himalayan Balsam.

For more information on Grow Me Instead, or to see the full guide, visit www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca