

# Invasive Aliens



**THE FAIRFIELD ASSOCIATION (15-05-14)**

**Keith Jones Keith@seasonalwildflowers.com**

**English wild flowers can be divided into types according to their origin**

### **Native**

**Indigenous plants have been around since the last ice-age**

### **Introduced or alien flowers**

**Archaeophytes** - non-native plant species introduced into England prior to 1492 and the discovery of the New World

**Neophytes** - non-native species introduced after 1492

**Some plants introduced prior to 1492 are classed as neophytes because they did not escape into the wild until after that date**

## **Escapes into the wild**

**Casual** – persist weakly, die off in a year or two, do not become naturalised in the wild

**Naturalised** – persist, multiply and form permanent populations in the wild

**Invasive aliens** - introduced plants, which escape cultivation and form persistent, spreading and **nuisance** populations in the wild

**This may happen many years after their introduction into the UK**

**There are 1,402 non-native plants established in the wild in Great Britain, of which 108 (8%) are stated to have a negative impact**

## **The Plant Hunters**

**Sir Joseph Banks went with Captain Cook to the South Pacific (1768-1771). He became informal director at Kew in 1773 and helped make Kew the foremost botanical garden in the world**

**Sir Joseph Hooker (1817-1911) collected c.700 species in India and Nepal and added 25 new rhododendrons to the 50 already known, helping to create a rhododendron craze amongst British gardeners**

**In the 20th century, Kew used its own botanists to obtain plants from around the world, and free-lance plant collectors also sent in plants**

**Frank Kingdon-Ward (1885-1958), the last of the great plant collectors, sent 120 plants to Kew**

**The plant hunters were adventurers and have had a good press, at least until now.**

**They brought back the biggest, the showiest and the most colourful plants; mainly for botanical gardens and the great estates and gardens.**

**Now, some of their introductions have escaped, taken over habitats and become a nuisance**



**Giant Hogweed by the River Brit, Dorset**  
*Heracleum mantegazzianum*



**Size is everything!**



**Leaves, up to a metre across, are said to deprive native species of light**





**It was introduced from the Caucasus and planted in gardens and estates in the 1820s and has continued to escape ever since. Large stands occur in waste-land and beside streams and rivers**



**Hogweed asymmetric flowers**



**Each plant can produce 5000 seeds. Dispersal is helped when they grow near waterways. Some Victorians practiced guerrilla gardening**



**Furocoumarins in the bristles and sap cause photodermatitis**



**Hollow stem of Giant Hogweed in winter – 10cm<sup>+</sup> across**

## Public safety notice



### Giant hogweed

Giant hogweed plants (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) are growing in this area.

#### What's the danger?

Giant hogweed stems contain a large amount of sap that squirts out when stems are damaged or cut.

Coming into contact with the sap of giant hogweed, followed by exposure to sunlight, causes painful, burning blisters known as phytophotodermatitis.

Blisters usually occur 24 to 48 hours after exposure, and dense skin pigmentation is visible after three to five days. Affected areas of skin may be photosensitive for several years.

#### What should I do?

If you see a giant hogweed plant, do not touch it.

West Dorset District Council is aware of the problem and is working with the land owner to eradicate the plant from this area.

If you suspect you have touched giant hogweed, contact your healthcare provider as soon as possible after exposure.

#### What does giant hogweed look like?

Giant hogweed is easy to identify when fully grown by height, size of leaves and size of flowers. It is capable of growing up to a height of five metres.

It can be confused with native hogweed/cow parsley when not fully grown or when growth is stunted (e.g. re-growth after cutting).

#### Key ID features



West Dorset District Council  
Stratton House  
58-60 High West Street  
Dorchester  
Dorset DT1 1UZ  
Tel: (01305) 251010

For more information on giant hogweed  
please visit [www.nonnativespecies.org](http://www.nonnativespecies.org)

[www.dorsetforyou.com](http://www.dorsetforyou.com)

Images courtesy of [www.seasonalwildflowers.com](http://www.seasonalwildflowers.com)

## Triffid from behind the Iron Curtain

Became infamous in 1970s when children developed blisters from using stems as blow-pipes and telescopes.

Workmen clearing Giant Hogweed stands were also affected

Caused by furocoumarins in the bristles and sap which react with sunlight to cause photodermatitis

The same toxins are found in Hogweed and Wild Parsnip

How often does it happen?

**Because **Giant Hogweed** causes skin irritation it is classed as a poisonous plant**

**Giant Hogweed is listed under Schedule 9 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 with respect to England, Wales and Scotland**

**It is an offence to plant or otherwise cause Giant Hogweed to grow in the wild**

**Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Giant Hogweed is classified as controlled waste**

**Times 03-09-2013**

**Man in Whitley Bay suffered severe agonising blisters after his wife asked him to investigate a big plant she wanted for her garden.**

**Has been told not to expose his leg to sunlight for 7 years**



**Himalayan Balsam, *Impatiens glandulifera* , beside the River Ribble, Lancashire**





**Introduced from Himalayas in 1839 and was widely naturalised in West Country by 1900  
Now spread throughout UK and dominates river banks and damp areas**



**Poor-man's Orchid?**



**Capsules can be eaten. May prevent scurvy when diet otherwise consists of tinned food**



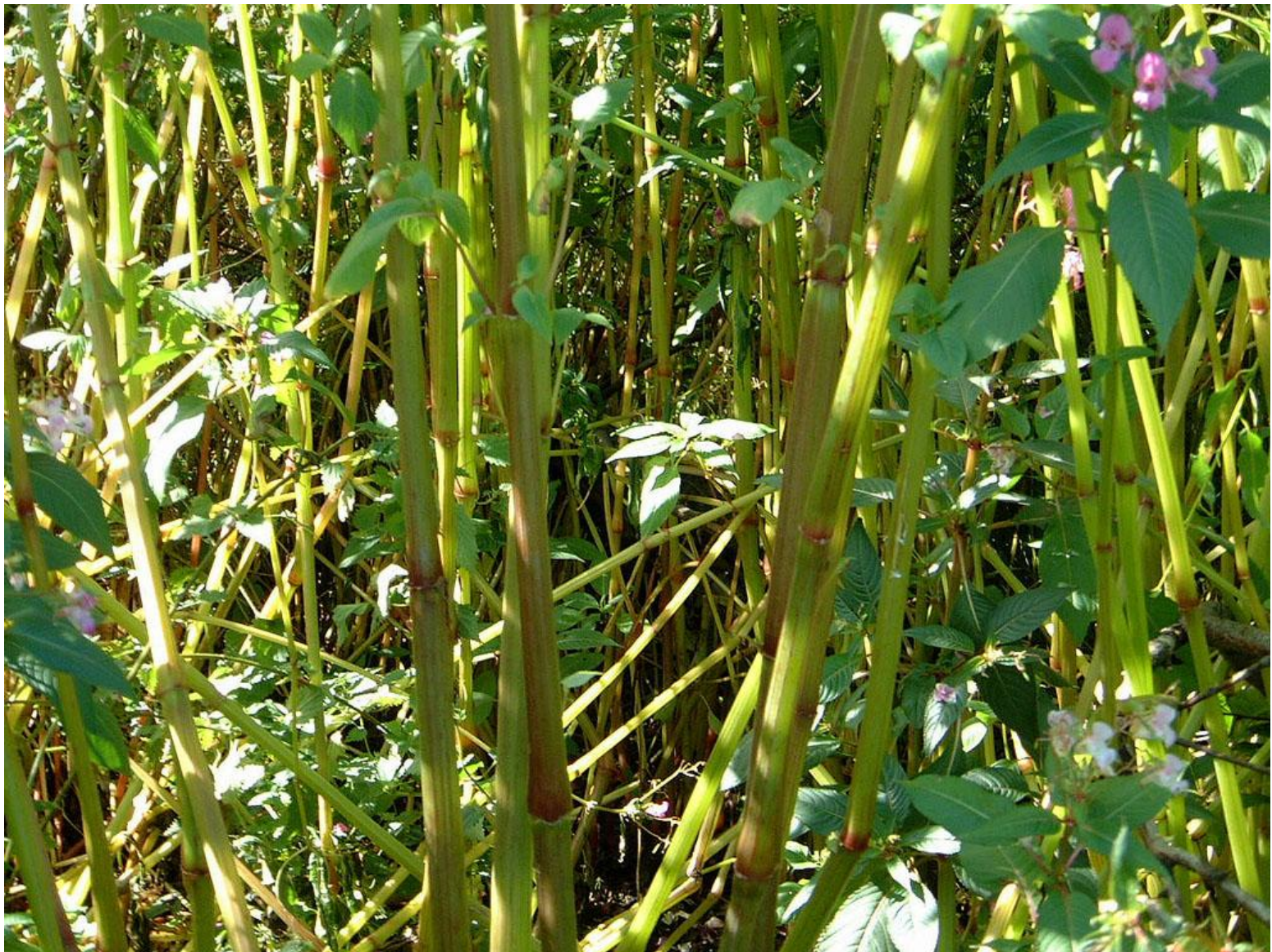
**Popping of the capsule helps to spread the seeds  
According to R. Mabey in Weeds and in Flora Britannica, the  
record distance is 12 yards**



**Seedlings smother most opposition**



**As do leaves**



**and stems**

**A lot of people like them but conservation groups have Balsam Bashing Parties**



**Small Balsam, *Impatiens parviflora*, Hampstead Heath, London  
Introduced from Russia in 1850s, can form large colonies even in  
established woodland**





**Explosive dispersal in Himalayan Balsam, Small Balsam and Busy Lizzies**



**Waterway at West Bay, Dorset, clogged with Creeping Water Primrose**



**Creeping Water Primrose**

*Ludwigia peploides*





**The river Lez, Montpellier, France**

**Water Primrose deliberately introduced into the Camargue**

***This is a species alert issued as part of the GB rapid response protocol:***

An invasive non-native plant from South America, which has become a serious pest in other countries, including France, where it smothers water bodies reduces the numbers of native species and increases the risk of flooding.

Water Primrose has been found in some parts of England and Wales. If you think you've seen it, check with our [Identification sheet](#). Sightings should be reported:

- **through our website** - [Ludwigia grandiflora recording page](#)
- **by email** - [alert\\_nonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alert_nonnative@ceh.ac.uk)

Further information:

- [Wanted poster](#)
- [Identification sheet](#)
- [More images](#)
  
- [Risk assessment](#)
- [Invasive Species Action Plan](#)
- **NNSIP pages** - not yet available

## WATER PRIMROSE

*Ludwigia grandiflora* & *Ludwigia peploides*

### What is it?

An invasive non-native plant from South America. It has become a serious pest in other countries, including France, where it smothers water bodies reducing the numbers of native species and potentially increasing the risk of flooding.



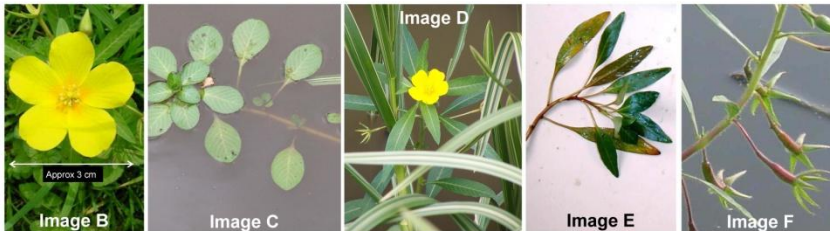
### Where might I see it?

A recent invader which has been spreading rapidly and may be found across Great Britain in ponds, lakes and slow flowing water. May be present in gardens (in which it was originally planted).

### How do you distinguish it from other plants?

- > Grows upright (image a and d) as well as a spreading form in water (image c).
- > Leaves dark green with lighter central vein, shape varies from long and thin to oval (image c, d and e).
- > Bright yellow flowers with 5 petals present July to August (image b).
- > Characteristic fruits which contain seeds (image f).

for more ID go to [www.nonnativespecies.org/02\\_identification%20Sheets.cfm](http://www.nonnativespecies.org/02_identification%20Sheets.cfm)



If you find this plant in the wild, in a garden or on sale, please contact:

**01208 265033**

**[trevor.renals@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:trevor.renals@environment-agency.gov.uk)**

Control and management of invasive alien (non-native) plants is under the auspices of a Defra (Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) committee - **NSSS** (GB Non-native Species Secretariat)



**Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) forms dense stands and squeezes out other plant species and outcompetes native plants, resulting in a botanical "monoculture"**



**It can reach 4m in height and can grow up to 30cm in a day  
Young shoots eaten by Japanese**





**It is attractive to insects in high summer**

**Alien species, such as, Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) may affect ecosystem services, which in turn can have an impact on human well-being**

**Its powerful root system can reach depths of 3m into the soil and spread up to 20 m, making it almost impossible to eradicate once it becomes established**

**The rhizome system of Japanese knotweeds can seriously damage infrastructure, such as buildings, river bank stabilisations and water channels, railway tracks and roads, and construction land**

**By disrupting the integrity of flood defence structures, the risk of flooding is increased**



**Aftermath of spraying Japanese Knotweed by the River Lune, Lancaster, in preparation for building work (2005)**

**Eradicating Japanese Knotweed costs Defra £5.7 million a year**

**Clearing the Olympic site of Japanese Knotweed cost £70 million**



**In 2010 Defra started a trial using a phloem-feeding psyllid, *Aphalara itadori*, as a biological control**

## **From the horses mouth**

**Yes, I did have a problem selling a property because there had been a small infestation of Knotweed that I had had treated for 3 years with glyphosate as it emerged.**

**There was no evidence of it when I offered the property for sale, but I did declare it to the purchaser.**

**Quotes for removal were about £45,000, and this was the reduction I had to make in the sale price.**

**The quote was to remove the soil to a depth of 4m and a diameter of 8m around the infestation, a barrier was then constructed around the perimeter of the excavation.**

**I think that was to satisfy local authority building regulations**

# Fear of weeds drove man to kill his wife

A man bludgeoned his wife to death before killing himself over fears that their home was blighted by Japanese knotweed, an inquest was told.

Kenneth McRae, 52, a lab technician, battered his wife, Jane, 55, with a bottle of perfume as she lay in bed at their house in Rowley Regis, West Midlands, causing fatal head injuries.

In a suicide note, he wrote: "I believe I was not an evil man, until the balance of my mind was disturbed by the fact there is a patch of Japanese knotweed which has been growing over our boundary fence on the Rowley Regis Golf Course."

He claimed that the managers of the golf course had been made aware of the problem of the invasive plant but that nothing had been done. The risk of structural damage and legal battles led to his "growing madness", he said.

The inquest at Smethwick Council House ruled that Dr McRae, who was found with neck and wrist injuries, unlawfully killed his wife before committing suicide.

Robin Balmain, the Black Country Coroner, said it appeared that he had suffered from paranoia over the knotweed, which was not found on their property although a patch had been discovered near by. "It is difficult to understand what was going on in Dr McRae's mind," he added.

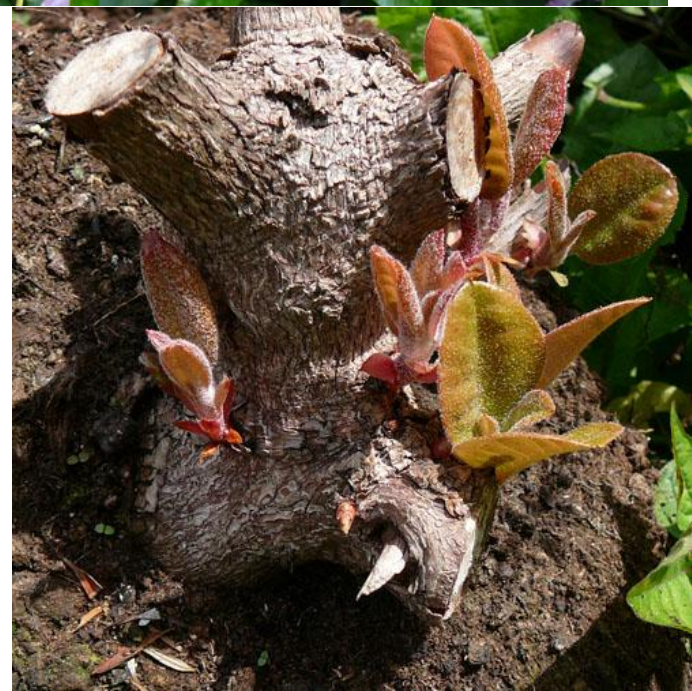


***Rhododendron ponticum* was introduced from Spain in the 1760s, escaped into the wild by the 1890s and spread widely in the 20th century**





**It cost £11 million to clear *R. ponticum* from a welsh national park and £25 million to clear it from the Loch Lomond and Trossachs national park**







Rock Cotoneaster *Cotoneaster integrifolius*

## Cotoneasters

Dorset Wildlife Trust is working to eradicate cotoneasters from quarries on Portland  
Several species are causing problems:

Hollyberry Cotoneaster - *C. bullatus*, Wall Cotoneaster - *C. horizontalis*, Small leaved Cotoneasters - *C. microphyllus* agg. and Himalayan Cotoneaster - *C. Simonsii*.



Rock Cotoneaster *Cotoneaster integrifolius*

## **EU Directive April 2014**

### **Commission proposal for EU legislation to address invasive alien species and protect biodiversity**

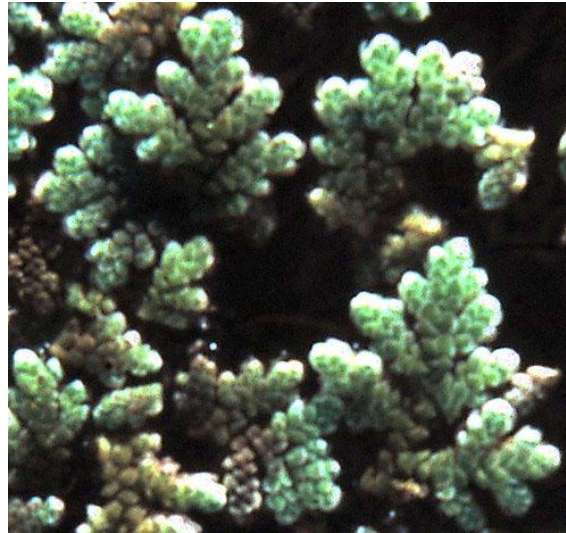
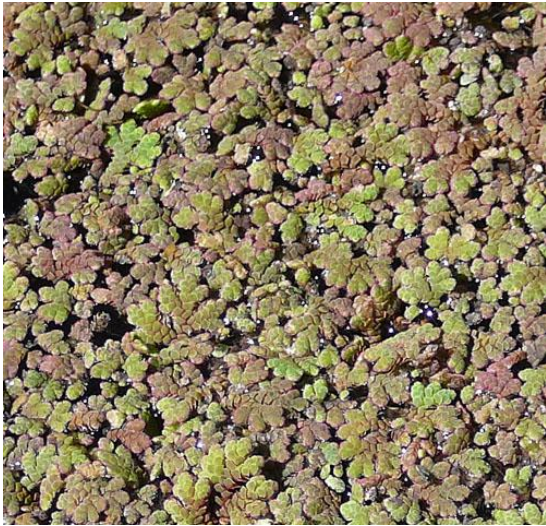
The European Commission has published a proposal for a Regulation on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species.

The proposal seeks to address the problem of invasive alien species in a comprehensive manner so as to protect native biodiversity and ecosystem services, as well as to minimize and mitigate the human health or economic impacts that these species can have.

The proposal is for three types of interventions; prevention, early warning and rapid response, and management.

A list of invasive alien species of Union concern will be drawn up with Member States using risk assessments and scientific evidence.

The proposed Regulation will now be examined by the Council and the Parliament.



**These plants are banned from sale from April 2014:**

**water fern**

**parrot's feather**

**floating pennywort**

**water primrose**

**Australian swamp stonecrop**





### **Exploitation of new environment**

Until the 1980s Danish Scurvygrass, *Cochlearia danica*, was found on coastal cliffs, sand dunes and sea-walls.

Since then, it has become established on the central reservation of motorways, dual carriageways and verges adjacent to trunk roads.

It is a native, mat-forming herb with a requirement for salt - hence its migration from the coast to salt-treated roads.



**M6 Lancaster**



**Contaminated imported materials**

**Pirri-pirri bur, *Acaena novae-zelandiae*, Holy Island, Northumberland**



**Pirri-pirri-bur is a contaminant of imported wool shoddy and known in the wild since the early 1900s when it colonised dunes and dune slacks**

**The burrs attach to clothes, trainers and pets and are transported elsewhere - hence this warning notice**







## Caution - Pirri-pirri bur

NATURAL  
ENGLAND

Pirri-pirri bur grows throughout the dunes. It is very likely to become matted in clothing and fur, especially between July and October.

Pirri-pirri bur is a non-native plant introduced from New Zealand which has become established here. It rapidly spreads and has a negative impact on our native wildlife.

Please ensure that it is not spread to other sites by checking your clothing and pets and removing any burrs before you leave Lindisfarne.

Thank you for your cooperation.

For further information contact the Site Manager on 01289 381470.

The seedheads of Pirri-pirri bur are covered in hooked red spines which catch on clothes and animal fur.





## **Escape from Agriculture**

**Oil-seed Rape, *Brassica napus* subsp. *Oleifera*, has been known in the wild since the 1600s**

**Cultivation of Oil-seed Rape took off in the 1980s due to EU agricultural policies**

**It is now spreading along roads and motorways**



## **Increased Range**

**Montbretia, *Crocsmia aurea* x *C. pottsii* (*C. x crocosmiiflora*), is the result of a cross between 2 South African species and has been an escape in England since the early 1800s**

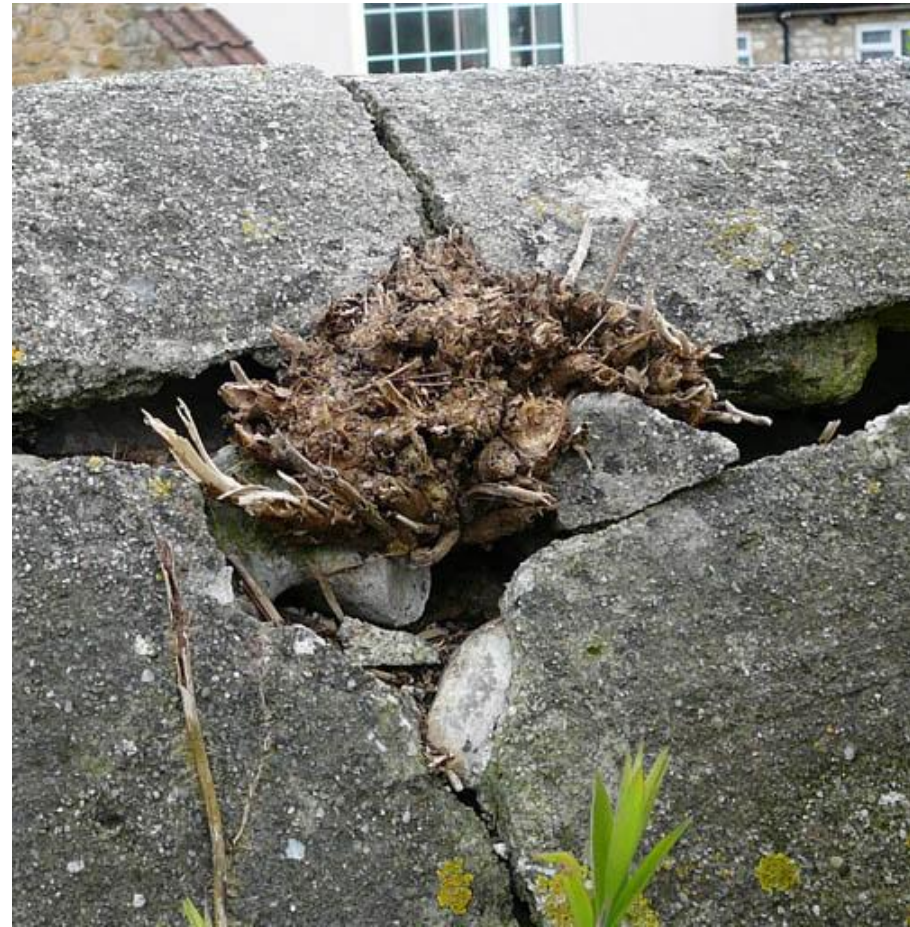
**It forms patches by roads and in woods, hedge banks and waste ground**

**It has recently been increasing its range**



### **Rapid extension of range since 1990s**

**Alexanders, *Smyrniolus atrum*, grows by roads and paths, on cliffs and wasteland  
Alexanders is an archaeophyte brought to England by the Romans for cultivation as a food crop and a medical herb. It was replaced by celery in the Middle Ages  
Becoming a nuisance, especially in the Southwest**



### **Damage to walls**

**Red Valerian, *Centranthus ruber*, was introduced from the Mediterranean region in the 1590s and recognised as a naturalised escape in the 1760s**

**It grows on walls, sea-cliffs and rocks, especially near the coast**

**The sawn-off section of the stem is 10cm across and has forced sections of the wall apart**



**Buddleia (Butterfly-bush) and Himalayan Honeysuckle (Pheasant Berry) colonise waste land and cracks in walls, pavements and chimneys – both are on the increase**



### **Bird sown**

**Thorn-apple, *Datura stramonium*, suddenly appears in gardens and is either bird-sown or from bird seed**

**(Seeds are long lasting and lie dormant for long periods, only germinating when ground is disturbed)**

**It has been grown in England since the late 1500s, when it was used for the production of alkaloids. It has been recognised as a naturalised, poisonous escape since the 1770s**



### **Bird sown**

**Apple-of-Peru (Shoo-fly), *Nicandra physalodes*, was introduced from South America in the late 1750s and known in the wild since the 1860s**

- It grows in gardens as a bird-sown alien
- It is classed as an invasive alien in the USA
- It is poisonous and has insecticidal properties





## **Quinoa**

*Chenopodium quinoa*

**The United Nations General Assembly declared 2013 as the "International Year of Quinoa".**

**The Portland Bird Observatory on Portland Bill grow a range of seed-producing crops, which they leave as food for the large numbers of indigenous and migrant birds visiting the area**



**Rosy Garlic, *Allium roseum*, grows on waste ground, hedge banks and by roads, often on the coast. It is a neophyte, grown in England since the 1750s, and known in the wild since the 1830s. It is on the increase in the Southwest**



**Honey Garlic, *Nectaroscordum siculum*, is a neophyte, grown in gardens since the 1830s, and recognised in the wild since the early 1900s. Naturalized in woods and waste ground (often a garden escape or discard?). Often bird-sown, it is increasing its range**



Above **Chesil** beach - Abbotbury  
←

In the middle of Dawlish Warren  
Nature reserve  
↓



**Daffodils are everywhere in the wild**

**Perhaps people cannot bring themselves to destroy surplus bulbs and so throw them away in the countryside where they can still live?**



***Lonicera fragrantissima***



**Winter Honeysuckle**

It grows (grew) in my garden and killed an adjacent pear tree, caused die-back in a nearby Buddleja and inhibited a neighbouring arch-forming Wilson's Honeysuckle. I suspected allelopathetic effects and, indeed, the USDA states that Winter Honeysuckle is an invasive alien and produces allelopathetic chemicals, which inhibit other plants.

Australia is very active in exterminating invasive aliens. The wine growing areas around Adelaide have problems with Olive, Artichoke, Fennel and Bamboo

# **Sources of invasive aliens**

- 1. Deliberately brought in as a food plant or as an ornamental garden plant**
- 2. Accidentally brought in by wind or birds**
- 3. Accidentally as a contaminant of imported crops or goods**

## **Once in the UK, they escape:**

- a. Relic gardens, brown field sites**
- b. Throw outs**
- c. Windblown seed**
- d. Guerrilla gardening**
- e. Botanical gardens and garden centres**

## **Recent scientific reports have shown**

- **Approximately 60% of invasive plants come from horticulture (source- Royal Horticultural Society)**
- **19 of the 34 most invasive plant species are thought to have escaped from Botanical Gardens**
- **That invasive species radiate out from garden centres**



## **Escape from Botanical Gardens and exploiting walls and railways**

**In the 1700s, Oxford ragwort, *Senecio squalidus*, escaped from Oxford Botanical Garden into local gardens and walls and then throughout the UK via the railways**





**Purple Dewplant and Hottentot Fig  
at the Lizard in September**

**Purple Dewplant – *Disphyma crassifolium***



Hottentot Fig patch on Bryher, Isles of Scilly



Hottentot Fig - *Carpobrotus edulis*



**Tree Aeonium (Cliff Pasty)**  
*Aeonium arboreum*

**Migrating from walls to stony  
beaches**

**Bryher, Isle of Scilly**





**Tree Echium or  
Giant Viper's-bugloss**

***Echium pininana***

**Bryher, Isles of Silly**



**Shrub Goldilocks - *Chrysocoma coma aurea* – invading sandy beach grassland, Tresco, Isles of Scilly**



## **Report on Invasive non-native species – updated October 28 2013**

**Pirri-pirri Bur**, Few-flowered Leek, **Three-cornered Garlic**, Cape Pondweed, **Water Fern**, Fanwort, Australian Stonecrop, **Montbretia**, **Purple Dewplant**, **Hottentot Fig**, **several Cotoneasters**, **Gunnera**, **Sea Buckthorn**, **Spanish Bluebell**, Elodea (pondweeds), Floating Pennywort, **Water Hyacinth**, **Giant Hogweed**, **Himalayan Balsam**, **Yellow Variegated Archangel**, **Japanese Honeysuckle**, **Japanese Knotweeds**, **Water Primroses**, Parrot's Feather, **Fringed Waterlily**, Water Lettuce, **Virginia Creepers**, **Rhododendron ponticum**, **Japanese Rose**, Duck Potato, Giant Salvia, **Water Soldier**



3-cornered  
Leek



Gunnera



Sea Buckthorn



Spanish  
Bluebell





Yellow  
Variegated  
Archangel



Fringed  
Water-  
lily



Water  
-soldier



Japanese Rose

## **At last! A use for Mobile Phones**

***Dec. 17, 2012* — Mobile phone users are being urged to help fight the spread of invasive plants across the UK -- by downloading PlantTracker. The new app has already attracted 7,000 downloads and alerted ecologists to 2,500 sites where key invasive species have been spotted**

**Tracking and mapping invasive alien plants using mobile phone APPs has been a huge success for Citizen Science**

**<http://planttracker.naturelocator.org>**



**After clearing, stinging  
nettles and brambles take  
over**

**Is this better?**



**2010 Before** →



**2012 After** →



# Verdict on Invasive Aliens

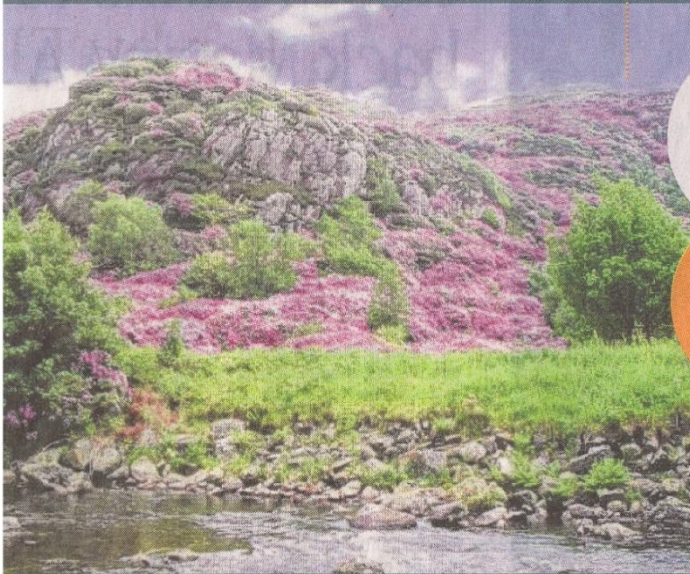
## Against

- **Expensive to eradicate- presently costing £1.7 billion a year in the UK**
- **Damage to walls, chimneys and flood defences**
- **Disrupt native species diversity**

## For

- **Much more colourful and showy than native species**
- **Cover waste ground and brownfield sites**
- **Provide cover and food for birds and insects**

any conservationists disagree



Bright pink flowers and dense bushes are transforming uplands in places such as Snowdonia

Britain has **1,646** native trees, shrubs and other plants

Humans have introduced **1,494** more 'alien' species



**Cotoneaster**

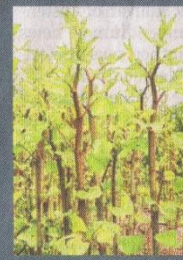
*Eurasia and Africa*  
Blankets cliffs, blocking birds such as choughs from their nesting sites

that has escaped to infest beaches and river valleys across western Britain. Up to 8ft high



**Japanese knotweed**

*Japan*  
Pernicious invasive weed that can grow through walls, tarmac and concrete



# Pushy foreigners brighten up Britain

## Welcome arrivals



**Roses**

*Asia*  
Enrich gardens and benefit pollinators



**English cox**

*Asia*

Apples, like almost all our crops, are descended from foreign imports

**Jonathan Leake**  
Environment Editor

**DENERS** and wildlife groups should drop their resistance to alien invasive species and instead welcome the way they "enrich" our native flora, a leading botanist will argue in a lecture this week. The lecture, a lecture backed by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS), Ken Thompson will argue that the hundreds of invasive plant species imported for Britain's gar-

wildlife. His suggestions, though, are likely to prove controversial.

Wildlife groups have long been infuriated at the way Britain's native trees and shrubs are being pushed out by foreign invaders, and have campaigned for such imports to be banned.

They point to the way exotic plants such as rhododendron have taken over swathes of Britain's uplands, while cotoneaster is invading many Welsh sea cliffs.

In his lecture on Thursday,

and suggest that most of the plants that have escaped from British farms and gardens have enriched the countryside.

"There is a conservation establishment out there who have decided that what we should conserve is a landscape that would have been familiar to Jane Austen. The general belief is that native plants are good and alien ones are bad.

"This, however, is just a subjective value judgment. The reality is that Britain has

flora — the woods of Germany and France are far richer than ours.

"My message for the RHS is that we should keep letting more plants come in. The key idea is that diversity is good for wildlife."

The sheer scale of plant "immigration" is illustrated by the New Atlas of British and Irish Flora, which records 1,646 trees, shrubs, herbs and other plants native to Britain — meaning that they have been here since soon after the last Ice Age ended about

nearly half our flora are "foreigners".

Many are harmless but Plantlife, the environmental group that campaigns to preserve native species, has drawn up a hitlist of 66 exotic species that it considers to be lethal to Britain's native flora.

"The last thing most gardeners want is to damage the environment," said Trevor Dines of Plantlife. "However, organisations like us and the National Trust are having to spend many mil-

plants is *Rhododendron super-ponticum* — created by plant breeders crossing a European species with an imported American one — whose bright pink flowers infest mountainsides and woodlands all over western Britain.

Another is the cotoneaster family whose 77 species now blanket many cliffs.

Botanists have also warned of a new threat from giant rhubarb, a species imported from South America whose 10ft wide leaves, set on an

coastlines and river valley in the wild areas of Devon Cornwall, Scotland and elsewhere.

Other pests include the notorious Japanese knotweed, a plant whose power to penetrate concrete can destroy property values.

Thompson accepts that a minority of imported plants are damaging but points out that many of our favourite "English garden plants were once considered aliens — including buddleia which came from China but

**Sunday Times 17 November 2013**

# **Pushy foreigners brighten up Britain**

**GARDENERS and wildlife groups should drop their resistance to alien invasive plant species and instead start welcoming the way they “enrich” our native flora, a leading botanist will suggest this week.**

**In a lecture backed by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS), Ken Thompson will suggest that the hundreds of invasive plant species imported for Britain’s gardens which have spread into the wild have had huge benefits, making the countryside “more interesting” and providing food and shelter for wildlife.**

**His suggestions, though, are likely to prove controversial.**

**Wildlife groups have long been infuriated at the way Britain’s native trees and shrubs are being pushed out by foreign invaders, and have campaigned for such imports to be banned.**

**They point to the way exotic plants such as rhododendron have taken over swathes of Britain’s uplands, while cotoneaster is invading many Welsh sea cliffs.**

# Alien invaders

Sir, Our society holds comprehensive data on all the wild plants of Britain and Ireland, native or alien. In representations to the Commons Environmental Audit Commission (report, Apr 16), we agreed that some (very few) alien plants were a nuisance and often made a bad situation worse. This, however, is truly minor compared with invasions by native plants (brambles, bracken, gorse, reeds, nettles and others), often resulting from changes in land use over the past 50 years, such as under-grazing or the lack of traditional woodland management. This, and the nitrogen pumped out by modern transport, has a far greater impact on biodiversity than any alien ever will. Our members know this well, but emotional headlines about “foreign” invaders win the research funding.

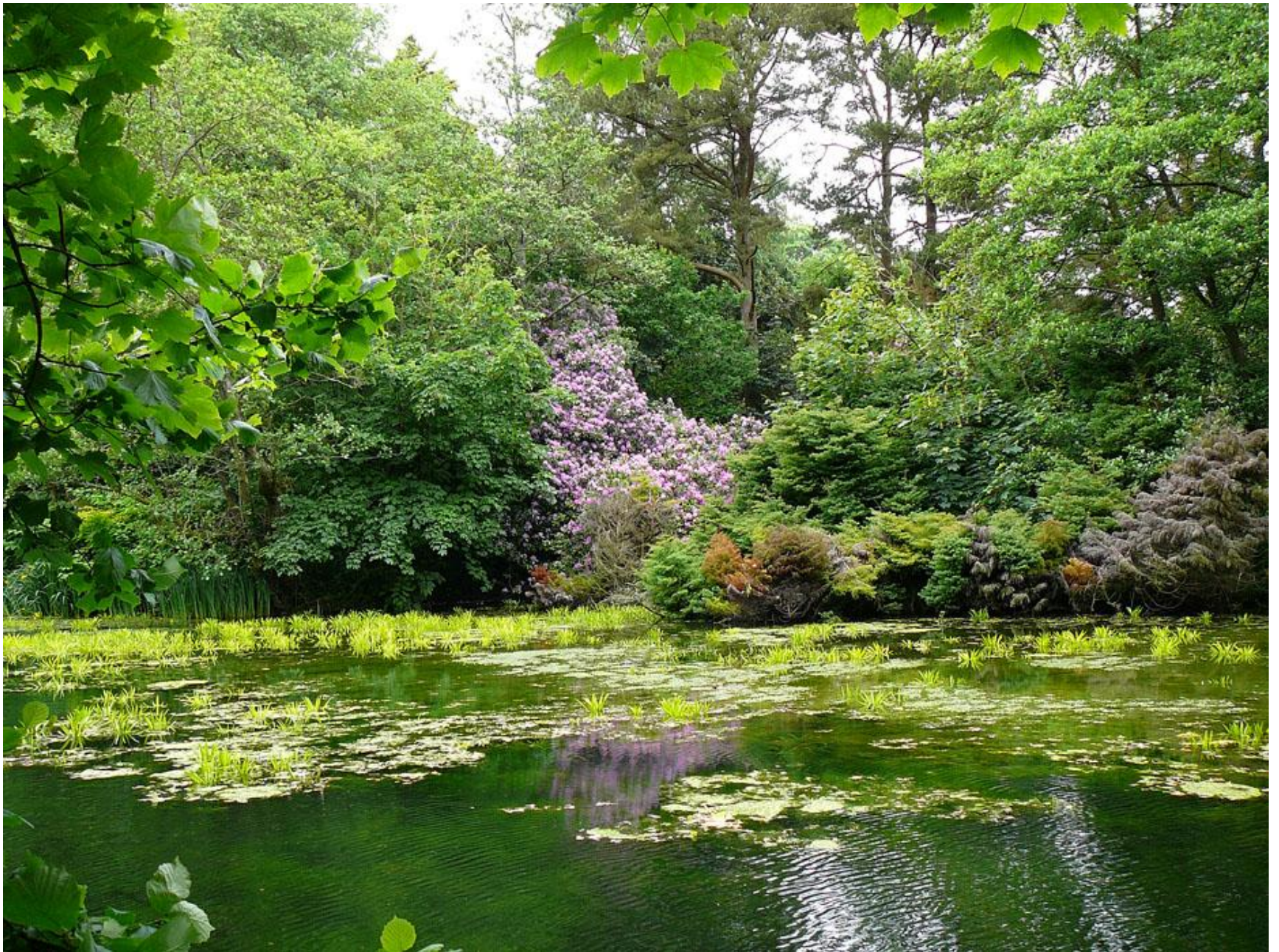
DAVID PEARMAN

Past president, Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland

**Letter in The Times 19-04-2014 after reports from the EU and the RHS on problems associated with the spread of invasive alien plants and arguments that alien plants are better at providing pollen and nectar than native plants**

**In April this year I noticed the biggest Docks I have ever seen in a scrub area adjacent to the where the M1/A1 joins the North Circular Road.  
I put this down to combined nitrogen from road vehicles**





**Harmony between native and alien invaders at Wayford woods**



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**Pictures and identifications from:**

**<http://seasonalwildflowers.com/>**



## **Invasive non-native plants**

**Many of the plants now considered invasive have been growing in the UK for over 100 years and for much of that time showed no sign of becoming a problem**

**They threaten native species and their habitats, and seriously damage economic interests - such as forestry, agriculture and fisheries**

**It is not an offence to have these plants growing on your land or in your garden, and you are not required by law to control them**

**It is a criminal offence to plant them in the wild or cause them to grow there, and you must report invasive plants**