

NON-NATIVE INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES IN COPYTHORNE PARISH

A special note to Parishioners about controlling this threat

Every year, we are seeing an emerging issue with the significant encroachment of non-native invasive plant species in Copythorne Parish.

What's the issue? We have many watercourses, culverts, drainage ditches and streams and these are the perfect environments for many of the species we need to worry most about.

Why is this important? This year, **due to the weather conditions in the past 6 months** and the legacy of previous 'invasions', we are seeing a significant amount of these plant species growing rapidly in our environment. In particular, the 2 which are most prevalent in the Parish are:

Himalayan Balsam - Introduced in the early nineteenth century as an ornamental garden plant, it thrives in damp areas like stream and watercourse banks and has attractive pink flowers.

However, when its seed pods ripen they 'explode', shooting the seeds up to a distance of 7 metres so it has 'jumped the garden fence' and spread into the wild where it can form dense colonies, out-competing our native wildflowers. Luckily it has short roots and is easy to pull up.

There is clear information on how to spot it and further advice at the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HIWWT) site - www.hiwwt.org.uk/new-forest-non-native-plants and see also the **Parish Council web site** for updated information on **Himalayan Balsam Removal Projects** where you can get involved in local volunteer teams to help clear this menace.



Japanese Knotweed - This species was introduced as a garden plant during the Victorian era. It can become highly invasive due to its extensive rhizome system and is notorious for causing structural damage and being a major problem in the countryside. If you spot any, it is important that you know what to do about it before it becomes impossible to manage.

Dealing with Knotweed is a professional activity using the right chemicals and procedures – you can't just cut it down and assume it's dealt with. You **must not** take it to Local Authority Waste Recycling Centres or put it in garden waste bags for collection.

There is clear information on how to spot it and further advice at:

www.gov.uk/guidance/prevent-japanese-knotweed-from-spreading. Also, other information and identification sheets for Japanese Knotweed and many other invasive plant species can be found at the **NSS site** – www.nonnativespecies.org.



Is it really that bad?

These are highly damaging plant species – they are not only a threat to the environment, they can also be a threat to the livelihood of people in the Forest community and in the particular case of Japanese Knotweed, ultimately cause major issues with the value of land and property – **in some very extreme cases rendering land and property values almost worthless.**

So what can you do?

You can help by keeping your eyes open when out and about. The web sites listed above provide some very helpful guidance on how to spot the plants and what to do about it if you do.

We really need to do all we can to control these plants as they encroach on our environment, so please help in any way you can!