Balfour's balsam

Impatiens balfourii

**ALSO KNOWN AS:**
Balfour’s touch-me-not, poor man's orchid, Kashmir balsam.

**DESCRIPTION:**
Balfour’s balsam is a part of the Balsaminaceae family and grows in dense clusters. Each plant grows up to 2.5 feet (0.75 meters) tall.

**LIFE CYCLE:**
Annual.

**LEAF AND STEM:**
Lance-shaped leaves grow up to 2 inches (5 centimeters) long. They are toothed on the sides and grow alternately along the stem.

The hollow stems are smooth, reddish green, and very branched. Roots are shallow and succulent.

**FLOWER AND SEEDS (OR FRUIT):**
White and pink flowers bloom from July to September. Flowers are 0.75-1.75 inches (2-4.5 centimeters) long and have a straight spur behind the petals. Flowers bloom in loose clusters of four to eight.

Seed pods are 0.75 inch (2 centimeters) long and ripen by October. Plants violently eject seeds up to 20 feet (6 meters) away when ripe. Seeds remain viable in the soil for 18 months.

**REPORT:**
If you think you've spotted Balfour’s balsam, please report it to the Oregon Invasive Species Hotline: OregonInvasivesHotline.org.

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**RATINGS**

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<th>STATE OF OREGON:</th>
<th>STATE OF WASHINGTON:</th>
<th>FOUR-COUNTY CWMA (Regional):</th>
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Balfour’s balsam

*Impatiens balfourii*

**DISTRIBUTION:**
There have only been a few reports of Balfour’s balsam in Washington County, generally in gardens or natural areas where it escapes from nearby residencies.

**HABITAT:**
Balfour’s balsam grows in riparian areas. It thrives in wet soil without too much direct sunlight. It is occasionally planted as an ornamental in gardens or landscaped areas.

**NATIVE RANGE AND HOW IT ARRIVED HERE:**
Balfour’s balsam is native to the Himalayas, growing in wet, mountainous areas.

It was first brought to England as an ornamental species and then to the United States.

**HOW IT SPREADS:**
It is still occasionally available at nurseries for residential gardeners. In riparian areas, seeds are carried downstream to new locations. Boots, clothing, equipment, cars, and animal fur also picks seeds up and carries them to new locations.

**WHAT IT THREATENS:**
Balfour’s balsam forms thick stands and outcompetes native plants for sunlight, nutrients, and space.

Unlike native plants, its tiny roots do not hold soil and increase soil erosion along streams and rivers.

**LOOK-ALIKES:**
Policeman’s helmet (*Impatiens glandulifera*)

When in bloom, you can identify the two by observing the spur behind the petals. Policeman’s helmet has a small spur while Balfour’s balsam has a long, straight spur.

Balfour’s balsam’s flowers also have small yellow dots at the base of petals and policeman’s helmet does not. Additionally, Balfour’s balsam does not grow as tall as policeman’s helmet, which can grow to 8 feet (2.5 meters) tall.
BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES CONT.

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HOW CAN YOU CONTROL IT:

CULTURAL:
Prevention is the best cultural control of Balfour’s balsam. Before planting it in a garden, consider a native alternative like Douglas spirea (*Spirea douglasii)*.

MECHANICAL:
Hand pulling plants is a simple and effective control method. This is best done in the spring before flowers and seedpods have formed. Plants are easily removed from the ground when pulled from the base. Make sure to remove all the roots to prevent it from re-growing. All plant material should be disposed of in a tied plastic bag and thrown away in the trash – not yard debris.

Pulled vegetation, without seed pods, can be piled on a tarp and placed in the sun to dry out. They can be composted after a week of drying.

Monitor the site for several years and remove any regrowth.

BIOLOGICAL:
Currently, there are no approved biological control agents for Balfour’s balsam.

CHEMICAL:
For specific herbicide information, please contact the Tualatin SWCD Invasive Species Program at invasives@tualatinswcd.org.

Tualatin SWCD does not endorse the use of specific herbicide brands or products. Consult the label for accurate application rates and appropriate sites to use on before every application.