

Orange Balsam

Species Description

Scientific name: *Impatiens capensis*

AKA: Jewelweed

Native to: Eastern North America

Habitat: Waterways e.g. riverbanks, canals, reservoirs, etc.

Orange Balsam is an erect, annual plant which can be easily distinguished from its Himalayan counterpart by its distinctive orange flowers, speckled with brown spots on the inner surface. Within the UK, the range of this plant appears to largely be restricted to waterways e.g. riverbanks and canals, although this does not limit its potential to spread rapidly.

First recorded growing wild in Albury (Surrey) 1822, the spread of this invasive plant appears to have been relatively slow compared to other alien flora. Current records suggest Orange Balsam is largely restricted to the central areas of the UK with sparse populations reported in Scotland and Wales. This lack of spread may be due to the plants' need for specific habitat conditions or as a result of underreporting given the notoriety of its Himalayan alternative. As a self-seeding species however, it may be able to sustain its present range for many years with relatively little issue.

There are currently no significant ecological or economic threats associated with Orange Balsam, although its continuing spread may be of conservation concern. Furthermore, this is a relatively little studied species and thus its true impacts within the UK may yet to be measured. This lack of knowledge is of particular concern, as within its native range, it is known as an aggressive competitor which forms dense stands to the exclusion of other flora species.

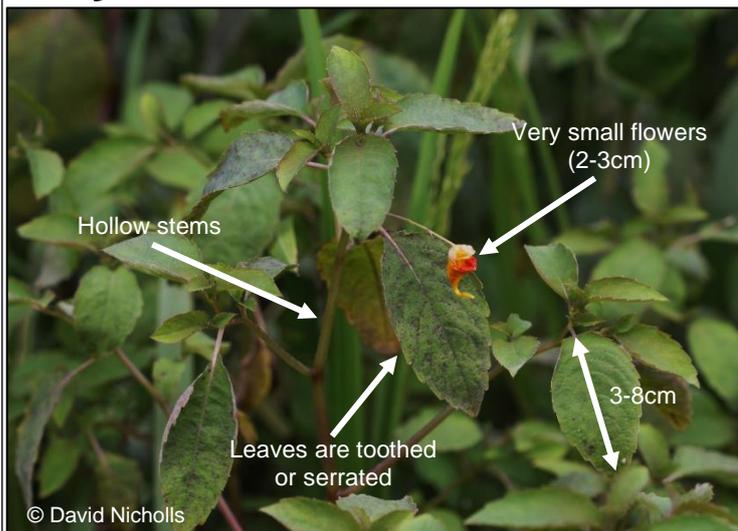


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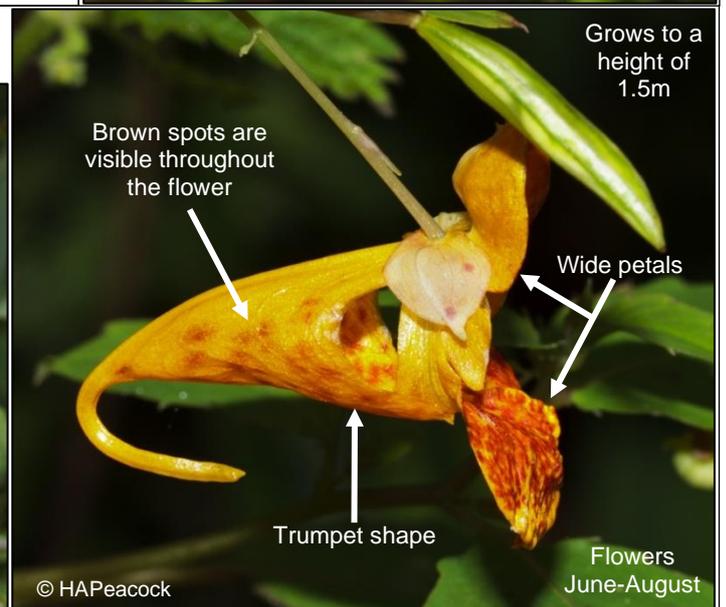


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Key ID Features



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Identification throughout the Year

Orange Balsam is most easily recognised by its trumpet shaped flowers which grow to 2-3 centimetres in length and can be observed during its annual flowering period from June to August. Outside of this however, Orange Balsam is distinguished from its native and other non-native counterparts by its comparatively smaller, serrated leaves which reach a maximum length of 10 centimetres. This plant grows to a maximum height of 1.5 metres.



Similar Species

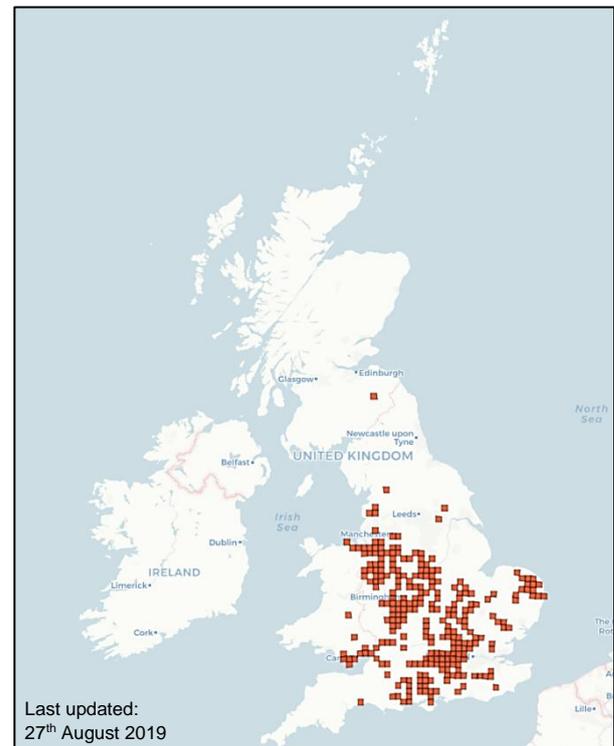
Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)
[Non-native]

Due to their distinctively shaped flowers, there are few plants found within GB that could easily be confused with Orange Balsam, although misidentification outside of the flowering period is possible. Himalayan Balsam is the most famous and widespread of the invasive non-native balsams, and is visually very similar to its orange counterpart, although during the summer, the deep purple flowers are a clear distinguishing characteristic. Otherwise, the larger leaves of Himalayan Balsam (2.5-4cm) compared to that of its orange counterpart (2-3cm) and greater overall height (up to 2m) can be used as key identifying characteristics.

Both species of balsam are highly attractive with gardeners and horticulturalists due to their attractive flowers and relatively hardy nature. It should not however be understated that the negative impacts that these plants can have on the environment often outweigh their merits.

Distribution

Orange Balsam is currently restricted largely to central and Southern England, although a small number of reports of Welsh and Scottish populations have also been made.



References and Further Reading:

Day, P. (2010) *Species account: Impatiens capensis*. Available at: <http://sppaccounts.bsbi.org/content/impatiens-capensis-1.html> (Accessed: 06th March 2019).

GBNNS (2019) *Jewel-Weed, Impatiens capensis*. Available at: <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/factsheet/factsheet.cfm?speciesId=1809> (Accessed: 06th March 2019).

Karriker, K. (n.d.) *Jewelweed (Impatiens capensis)*. Available at: https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/plant-of-the-week/impatiens_capensis.shtml (Accessed: 06th June 2019).

Streeter, D. (2009) *Collins flower guide : the most complete guide to the flowers of Britain & Europe*. London: Collins.

