CLYDE INVADERS: HIMALAYAN BALSAM

Origin: Himalayas
Timing: spring to autumn
Habitat: Gardens and allotments, often those adjacent to infested riverbanks and waste places.

Description:
Himalayan balsam is a tall growing annual, 2-3m (6-10ft) in height. Between June and October it produces clusters of purplish pink (or rarely white) helmet-shaped flowers.

Himalayan balsam tolerates low light levels and also shades out other vegetation, so gradually impoverishing habitats by killing off other plants. It produces a lot of pollen over a prolonged season and is attractive to pollinating insects. There is concern that its presence may therefore result in decreased pollination for other native plants.

CLYDE INVADERS: GIANT HOGWEED

Origin: Southern Russia (introduced to the UK in the nineteenth century)
Timing: spring to autumn
Habitat: Typically beside water courses, streams etc.

Description:
Giant hogweed (Heracleum mantegazzianum), is a tall, cow parsley-like plant with thick bristly stems that are often purple-blotched.

The flowers are white, umbrella shaped, with all the flowers facing upwards. The flower heads can be as large as 60cm (2ft) across. It can reach a height of 3.5m (11.5ft) or more and has a spread of about 1-2m (3.5-7ft).

Chemicals in the sap can cause photodermatitis or photosensitivity, where the skin becomes very sensitive to sunlight and may suffer blistering, pigmentation and long-lasting scars. Contact with eyes can cause temporary or permanent blindness.

DANGER! HIGHLY TOXIC

CLYDE INVADERS: JAPANESE KNOTWEED

Origin: Japan
Timing: late spring to autumn
Habitat: Waysides, beds, borders and paving.

Description:
Japanese knotweed is a strong-growing, clump-forming perennial, with tall, dense annual stems. Stem growth is renewed each year from the stout, deeply-penetrating rhizomes (creeping underground stems).

In spring and summer, bamboo-like shoots grow to 2.1m (7ft) tall. Leaves are up to 14cm (5½in) in length and the creamy-white flower tassels produced in late summer and early autumn reach up to 15cm (6in).

CLYDE INVADERS: SIGNAL CRAYFISH

Origin: America (introduced to UK in 1970s)
Habitat: Freshwater - rivers, canals, streams and lakes.

Description:
The signal crayfish is lobster-like in appearance and reaches a maximum size of 16-18cm. It is much larger than the native white-clawed crayfish and its claws have red undersides with a small turquoise/white blotch on the upper surface at the claw hinge.

The signal crayfish is well established in England and Wales, especially in the south-east of England. Not as prevalent in Scotland but several well-established populations have been recorded, including two known populations in the River Clyde.

CLYDE INVADERS: CHINESE MITTEN CRABS

Origin: China
Habitat: rivers, brackish water estuaries, rarely along the marine inshore coast.

Description:
Chinese mitten crabs are officially listed as one of the World's 100 worst invasive species. They can cause damage to fishing gear and river banks, block intake screens, modify natural habitats and compete with native species.

Their shells are a grey-green to dark brown colour, and squarish in shape, measuring up to 8.5 cm across. They have long legs, and their most distinguishing feature is the dense brown 'fur' on their white-tipped claws. Juveniles may lack this fur.