

# Policeman's Helmet

*Impatiens glandulifera*

Touch-Me-Not Family

## Identification Tips

- Annual that grows from 3 to 8 feet tall; also called Himalayan balsam
- Hollow, watery, upright stems with purple or reddish tinge
- Irregular five-part flowers shaped like an English policeman's helmet
- Flower colors range from white to pink to purple
- Large oblong or egg-shaped leaves with serrated edges; can be opposite or whorled in groups of 3
- Base of stem and exposed roots often reddish
- Glands at base of leaf

## Biology

Flowers from mid-June through October. Reproduces by seed; each plant produces capsules that explode upon the slightest touch. Seeds remain viable for up to 18 months; they float and germinate in water, allowing the plant to move down waterways into new areas.

## Impacts

Highly invasive, aggressive invader of wetlands, streams and moist woodlands. Displaces native and beneficial plants. Contributes to flooding and erosion by changing or stopping water movement.

## Distribution

Introduced from India. Found throughout King County in wetlands, riparian areas, gardens, parks and moist woodlands. Tolerant of many soil types; requires high moisture content, although not standing water. Thrives in partial shade, but will also grow in full sun.

## What You Can Do

The King County Noxious Weed Control Program is actively trying to control the spread of policeman's helmet. Do your part by removing this weed from your property and washing vehicles, boots and animals that have been in infested areas. If you find it growing in King County, please contact the Noxious Weed Control Program.

## Control Methods

For best results, control methods should be adaptive and employed through several growing seasons. Use one or a combination of the following methods, depending on infestation size and site type.

### Manual:

Policeman's helmet is an annual plant with relatively shallow roots that can be pulled easily during all life stages. Stems tend to snap off near the base so make sure to remove entire stem and root. Pulled plants can be

**Class B Noxious Weed:  
Control Required**



*Originally from northern India, policeman's helmet was brought to the United States as a garden ornamental.*



*Large oblong or egg-shaped leaves with serrated edges grow opposite or whorled in groups of 3 on stems.*



*Stem base often reddish, with glands at leaf bases.*

## Questions?

King County Noxious Weed Control Program: **206-477-WEED** [kingcounty.gov/weeds](http://kingcounty.gov/weeds)



composted on site if they are crushed and left on a tarp; otherwise bag and discard in trash.

**Mechanical:**

Mowed or cut plants resprout later in the season. Be sure to follow up with either hand pulling or additional mowing treatments. Stem cuttings may form roots if left on moist ground.

**Chemical:**

Herbicides may be a more effective method for large, dense infestations of policeman's helmet where access is difficult. Certain herbicides cannot be used in aquatic areas or their buffers. Aquatic herbicides can only be used by licensed aquatic applicators and a permit may be needed. **Should you determine that herbicides are allowable on the site, follow labels exactly as written.** Products containing glyphosate or triclopyr are effective if applied to actively growing plants. Chemical control options may differ for private, commercial and government agency users. For more information, contact the Noxious Weed Control Program.

**Could be confused with:**

**Spotted jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*) is similar to policeman's helmet and also grows along streams.**

This shorter member of the Touch-me-not family is native to eastern North America but was introduced to the Pacific Northwest and has naturalized extensively in western Washington and Oregon. Spotted jewelweed is 3-5 feet tall, has an orange, spotted flower with a spur, alternately-arranged leaves (not opposite), and broad, rounded lobing on the leaf edges compared with the narrow, pointed teeth on policeman's helmet's leaves. It is also invasive and is a Class C noxious weed in Washington.



*Spotted jewelweed (left) has broad, round lobing on leaf edges, while policeman's helmet leaf edges (right) have narrow, pointed teeth.*



*Orange-spotted flowers that appear in late summer distinguish spotted jewelweed from policeman's helmet.*



*Irregular white, pink, or purple flowers resemble English policeman's helmets.*



*Policeman's helmet's shallow reddish roots allow for easy pulling.*



*Policeman's helmet can be crushed and composted on site; however, plants with seed capsules should be bagged and put into the trash.*