

Invasive Non-Native Species

Plants classified as Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS), such as Himalayan Balsam, are spreading quickly across the UK. They displace native species and detrimentally affect the ecology of many vulnerable habitats. Some also pose a considerable threat to human health. These plants also present a large financial cost to the UK economy with the annual cost of all invasive, non-native species totalling some £2 billion.

The first step in tackling this problem is accurately determining where these plants are. The Environment Agency have developed a plant tracker app, which use 'citizen' collected data to map, track and in the future monitor treatment of INNS.

The apps provide reference guides to help people identify species. The maps that these apps produce can contribute towards a catchment action or delivery plan for INNS.

[The Plant Tracker project](#) is a collaboration between the Environment Agency, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, the Nature Locator team and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology.

The main aim is to locate incidences of high priority invasive plant species. There is currently a lack of information on exactly how serious the problem presented by invasive plant species really is.

With your help we hope to build the most complete picture yet and provide the raw data to those that need it most in (almost) real time.

Obtaining accurate data about the distribution of invasive species is of paramount importance when it comes to assessing impact and formulating a response, but data provision is often patchy and records are usually unverifiable and lacking accurate geographic reference.

The Plant Tracker project has addressed these problems by combining the development of a smartphone application with the power of crowd-sourcing data collection; that's to say the app enables real data to be collected by interested members of the public in the field.

Critically, each record collected is verifiable since it is comprised of a photograph along with other relevant metadata. Records are also accurately geo-located since the app utilises the phone's inbuilt GPS capabilities. Another benefit of the app is that includes photographic ID guides so that people can distinguish non-natives from our similar looking indigenous plants.

Data collected by the Plant Tracker app is passed through to the Biological Records Centre's iRecord system and verified data is passed onto the NBN Gateway.

Working for a river catchment with healthy fresh waters and wildlife, valued and enjoyed by local people