

Plant Biosecurity Policy

December 2022

Foreword

Protecting, restoring, and increasing biodiversity is a fundamental priority to safeguard the natural systems on which all life on earth is part of and depends.

With changes to how we produce our food, increasing movement of people and resources, alongside the impacts of climate change and other pressures, there are rising and new threats for nature which require our collective action and response to the Climate and Nature Emergency. This policy sets out the commitments and steps the council is taking for improved plant biosecurity to protect our natural environment and communities.

Raising standards of biosecurity across our area is fundamental to protecting and improving our environment to achieve our Green Infrastructure Strategy vision for 'greener places where people and nature thrive'

A proactive approach to biosecurity is essential to control and stop the spread of non-native invasive species and diseases. This includes measures for procurement regarding sourcing of plants, information sharing, hygiene, and control measures to stop the spread and protect nature and people.

To deliver this policy for the land we are responsible for, the council has an associated action plan for our operations, staff, and contractors to meet the three overarching biosecurity objectives of understand and detect, prevent, and respond.

We all have a part to play to achieve plant biosecurity and I welcome the approach and measures set out in this policy for the council to take action to protect our natural environment from invasive species and disease. I also hope that this policy will help to raise awareness and inspire action in our communities.



Image: view from the Cotswold hills over the Severn Vale of South Gloucestershire

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Part One – Setting the scene

1.1 Introduction

Since the early 2000s there has been an increase in the number of non-native invasive plant and animal species, pests, and diseases in the UK. Climate change and other factors are making it easier for some invasive non-native species (INNS) to become established and spread. INNS are a major cause for biodiversity loss and species extinction, affecting the health of habitats and causing significant changes to ecosystems and landscapes. Some INNS bring risks to property (Japanese Knotweed) and others pose risks to human health (Giant Hogweed). There is a need to address these risks within the management of open spaces and the environment in South Gloucestershire.

Biosecurity refers to the precautions for the prevention of introduction and spread of harmful organisms and non-native species. This includes **non-native invasive plant species, diseases, pests, pathogens, and injurious weeds**.

Good biosecurity practice involves early detection, ongoing surveillance, and contingency planning to eradicate or at least contain problems as they arise. South Gloucestershire Council declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019, recognising that the global climate is in a state of breakdown. We need to urgently prepare for the local impacts of a changing climate, reduce our carbon emissions and protect and restore nature.

We also know that climate change, along with other factors, is having a significant impact on the health of nature and ecosystems, and that this is a critical part of the wider environmental crisis. For this reason, the council has taken an approach that tackles the nature crisis together with the climate emergency and recognises that we face a [Climate and Nature Emergency](#).

Changing the way we manage our assets and work with our partners and communities to prevent and control invasive non-native species will play a key role to help us to tackle this emergency together.

1.2 Purpose

This policy outlines South Gloucestershire Council's plans to improve plant biosecurity through reducing the spread of invasive non-native plant species, injurious weeds, and plant diseases across open spaces owned or managed by South Gloucestershire Council.

1.3 Legislation & duties

This Plant Biosecurity Policy aligns with:

- [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981](#) - invasive non-native plants

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 is the primary piece of legislation in England and Wales for protecting wildlife. All birds and a variety of other plant and animal species are protected under this act.

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 it is illegal to plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild any plant listed in Schedule 9 as these may cause ecological, environmental, or socio-economic harm. All plants in Schedule 9 are listed in appendix two.

There are 36 species of invasive non-native plants which are of special concern because of their invasiveness and their ability to establish in several nations across Europe, including the UK. They cause severe problems for native UK plants and the environment. The 36 species are listed in appendix one.

The most common invasive non-native plants in the UK include:

1. Japanese knotweed
2. Giant hogweed
3. Himalayan balsam
4. Rhododendron ponticum
5. New Zealand pygmyweed

Defra's [Invasive non-native \(alien\) plant species: rules in England and Wales, 2020](#) states, 'you must not do any of the following with invasive non-native plants:

- Import
- Keep
- Breed
- Transport
- Sell
- Grow, cultivate or permit to reproduce

These rules also apply to specimens of listed invasive non-native species, including:

- Any live part of the species, such as seeds or cuttings that might grow or reproduce
- Hybrids, varieties or breeds of such a species that might survive and subsequently reproduce

If a listed plant is already growing on your land, then in the view of Defra, those plants are not considered to be intentionally kept or cultivated. But you should:

- Treat or dispose of them where possible
- Not intentionally allow them to grow or spread outside your land.

There are exemptions which can be found in Defra's [Invasive non-native \(alien\) plant species: rules in England and Wales, 2020](#).

- [Weeds Act 1959](#) - Injurious weeds

Under the Weeds Act 1959 enforcement action may be taken on the occupier of land on which injurious weeds are growing, requiring the occupier to take action to prevent the spread of injurious weeds. The Weed Act specifies five injurious weeds:

1. Common ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*)
2. Broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*)
3. Curled dock (*Rumex crispus*)
4. Creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*)
5. Spear thistle. Other common names: Scotch Thistle, Bell Thistle. (*Cirsium vulgare*).

These five injurious weeds can be identified using Defra's ['Identification of Injurious Weeds'](#) leaflet.

The Weeds Act was amended by the Ragwort Control Act of 2004. Ragwort is an important, nectar rich, native plant which has high biodiversity value. A strategic approach can be applied to assess and control the spread of ragwort where it poses a threat to the health and welfare of grazing animals and the production of feed or forage. Details of ragwort management are in **South Gloucestershire Council's 'Ragwort Policy, 2022'**.

Both Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed are dealt with under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. South Gloucestershire Council currently appoint specialist contractors to manage Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed as necessary.

- **Natural Environment and Rural Communities [\(NERC\) Act, 2006](#):**

[Section 40](#) – 'all public bodies must have regard for the purpose of conserving biodiversity in the discharge of their normal functions.'

Regarding biosecurity, NERC requires the council to control invasive species to ensure they are not detrimental to biodiversity.

- **South Gloucestershire Council's Pesticide Policy 2022**
- **South Gloucestershire Council's [environmental policy](#)**
- **South Gloucestershire Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy 2021**

'Protecting and enhancing the environment for future generations is a cross cutting value within the South Gloucestershire Community Strategy and is one of the core values that underpins all our work.'

- **South Gloucestershire Council's [Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery Action Plan](#)**

This Plant Biosecurity Policy sets out how the council will deliver Action N5 of the GI and Nature Recovery Action Plan:

'Action N5 - Improve biosecurity. Biosecurity Policy prepared and implemented to help address the spread of invasive species and diseases – policy prepared 2022'

1.4 Responsibilities

As set out in national legislation the council is responsible to stop invasive non-native plants, injurious weeds and plant diseases spreading on land owned and or managed by South Gloucestershire Council or spreading to third party land.

Invasive non-native plants must be prevented from spreading and causing a nuisance or damage to other land or property. If efforts to prevent spreading are not carried out, the landowner may be responsible for any damage the plants cause and may be prosecuted.

Around 10 new invasive non-native species of plants and animals come into and establish each year in the UK. Around 12 percent of these cause serious impacts and are classed as invasive, costing millions each year to control. Plants that have serious impact include giant hogweed (human health risks) and Japanese knotweed (infrastructure risks). These two plants are currently controlled by the council. A proactive approach to biosecurity is essential to control and stop the spread of non-native invasive species and diseases.

1.5 Current practice

The council currently work with specialist contractors to remove Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*). Information regarding the management of common ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*), an injurious weed, is set out in the South Gloucestershire Council Ragwort Policy 2022.

Invasive plant species of special concern as set out in Defra's '[Guidance. Invasive non-native \(alien\) plant species: rules in England and Wales.](#)' are listed in Appendix 1. Work is underway to raise awareness of these species and control requirements by staff and the public and is a key area of work and action to implement this policy.

Part two – Scope

2.1 In scope

The scope of this policy covers non-native plants that are known to be or are potentially invasive, or are classified as 'injurious weeds' as detailed in appendices one and two. The policy does not aim to address issues related to human health or formerly native species, nor does it cover animal INNS or diseases, although it aims to support close working in respect of these where appropriate.

Controlling the spread of invasive non-native plants and injurious weeds on land that is owned or managed by South Gloucestershire Council is included within this policy. Land owned or managed by third parties is not included in this policy.

2.2 Related biosecurity issues

There are also biosecurity issues from specific animals, pathogens, and other organisms that are outside of the scope of this policy. The council responds to other aspects of biosecurity which are covered through [pest control](#), [environmental health](#) and the [Tree Team](#).

Pest Control – the pest control service provided by the council offers advice and practical help with pest control. More information is available at [http://www.southglos.gov.uk/Pest control](http://www.southglos.gov.uk/Pest-control) | [BETA - South Gloucestershire Council \(southglos.gov.uk\)](#)

The Environmental Health Team at the council provide help, advice and enforcement about food safety, health and safety, neighbourhood pollution issues and environmental protection.

Dog fouling – Dog waste includes a range of pathogens which can be harmful to people, wildlife and the environment. The council are working to reduce dog waste in South Gloucestershire. They provide bins for dog waste and use powers under Section 59 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 to ensure dog owners meet their responsibilities and pick up after their dogs. More information is available at [Dog fouling and bins | South Gloucestershire Council \(southglos.gov.uk\)](#)

Tree biosecurity - Biosecurity risks relating to trees are out of scope of this policy. For example, ash dieback is a serious air born fungal disease having disastrous impact on UK ash trees. Detailed information about the council's response to ash dieback is available at [Ash dieback disease | South Gloucestershire Council \(southglos.gov.uk\)](#)

The council is taking proactive action to manage the risks and reduce the introduction and spread of other tree biosecurity risks including oak processionary moth and Horse Chestnut Leaf Miner as set out in the Councils [Tree Asset Management Plan | South Gloucestershire Council \(southglos.gov.uk\)](#)

Part three – Vision and objectives

3.1 Vision

To improve plant biosecurity through preventing the spread of non-native plants and injurious weeds in South Gloucestershire. To build awareness of the risks from pests and diseases, increase knowledge of how to reduce those risks and introduce a system of management to reduce risks.

3.2 Objectives

The council will take action to deliver 3 priority objectives to prevent, control and monitor the spread of non-native plants and injurious weeds:

1. Understand and detect

The council will have best practice at the core of its operations, acting upon existing threats and keep informed of new threats. The council will enable training of staff and public on invasive non-native species, injurious weeds and plant diseases.

2. Prevent

The council will identify and monitor the spread of non-native invasive plants, injurious weeds and plant diseases on land owned or managed by the council.

3. Respond

The council will act to prevent the spread and reduce introduction of invasive non-native plants and injurious weeds on council owned or managed land.

Part four – Actions and reporting

4.1 Policy actions

The council has prepared an operational action plan to implement this Plant Biosecurity Policy which sets out the action and proactive approach required to enact this policy. The council will embed these actions in its work to improve plant biosecurity.

The council's action plan implements the three objectives introduced in section 3.2, to understand and detect, prevent, and respond.

These objectives and actions align with two leading national government biosecurity campaigns which provide information and guidance for improving biosecurity in water and on land:

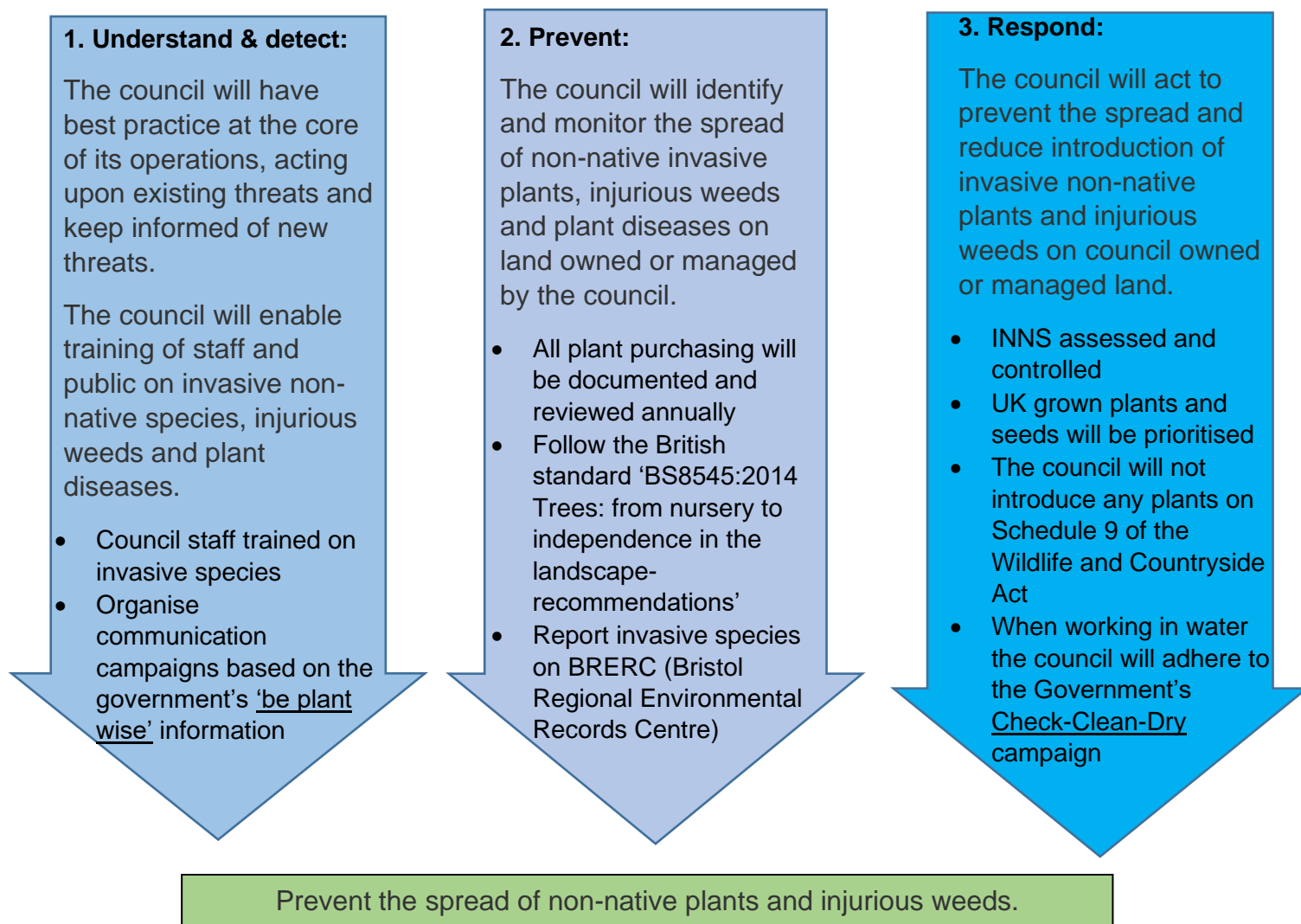
- [Check Clean Dry](#) - water based biosecurity
- [Be Plantwise](#) - land based plant biosecurity



Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*)

A non-native invasive plant species for which eradication and controlled disposal is a legal requirement [Japanese Knotweed » NNSS \(nonnativespecies.org\)](#)

Plant Biosecurity action flow chart:



4.2 Monitoring and reporting

Annual reporting on action plan progress will be included in the annual Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery Action Plan to 2030 progress report to Cabinet.

It is important to highlight that with increased understanding, detection, and awareness of NNS that reporting is anticipated to increase, and that increased reporting will not necessarily reflect an increase or decrease in INNS. Information on both the number of reports and action taken will therefore be captured.

Likewise, as explained in the councils Pesticide Policy, control of INNS currently often requires controlled use of pesticides, so information regarding pesticide use for control of INNS will be captured and included in the reporting on progress for the councils Pesticide and Plant Biosecurity policies. The council continues to trial and monitor alternatives to pesticide use to control invasive non native species and injurious weeds, and to apply latest best practice and compliance to requirements.

Further information

- **[Non Native Species Secretariat \(NNSS\)](#)**

View information or contact NNSS:

- for the up to date government biosecurity campaigns [Be Plant Wise](#) and [Check Clean Dry](#)
- identification information via the [Information Portal](#)
- biosecurity training

Email: nnss@apha.gov.uk

- **[Animal Plant Health Agency \(APHA\)](#)**

Contact APHA:

- for information about permits for research or conservation
- to report a permit offence

Telephone: 03000 200 301

Email: zooandinvasive@apha.gov.uk

- **[Natural England](#)**

Contact Natural England:

- for queries about licences to manage, control, move or keep these species
- to report a licence offence
- for guidance if you got a plant after it was listed in England

Telephone: 020 8026 1089

Email: invasive-alien-species-licence@naturalengland.org.uk

References

- [Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\) - pesticides](#)
- DEFRA [Bees' Needs: Food and a home - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- Pesticide Action Network www.pan-uk.org
- West of England Pollinator Strategy www.wenp.org.uk/pollinators
- [Buglife | Help Buglife save the planet](#)
- [Plantlife international](#)

- [South Gloucestershire Climate and Nature Emergency](#)
- [South Gloucestershire Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery Action](#)
- [http://www.southglos.gov.uk/Pest control | BETA - South Gloucestershire Council \(southglos.gov.uk\)](http://www.southglos.gov.uk/Pest%20control)
- South Gloucestershire Plant Pesticide Policy
- [Tree Asset Management Plan | South Gloucestershire Council \(southglos.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Ash dieback disease | South Gloucestershire Council \(southglos.gov.uk\)](#)

Appendix one: List of invasive plant species of special concern

Extracted from Defra's '[Guidance. Invasive non-native \(alien\) plant species: rules in England and Wales.](#)' These tables set out all plants that are listed species of special concern.

Widely spread in England and Wales:

Common name	Scientific name	Listing
American skunk cabbage	<i>Lysichiton americanus</i>	3 August 2016
Chilean rhubarb	<i>Gunnera tinctoria</i>	2 August 2017
Curly waterweed	<i>Lagarosiphon major</i>	3 August 2016
Floating pennywort	<i>Hydrocotyle ranunculoides</i>	3 August 2016
Giant hogweed	<i>Heracleum mantegazzianum</i>	2 August 2017
Himalayan balsam	<i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>	2 August 2017
Nuttall's waterweed	<i>Elodea nuttallii</i>	2 August 2017
Parrot's feather	<i>Myriophyllum aquaticum</i>	3 August 2016

Non widely spread in England and Wales:

Common name	Scientific name	Listing
Alligator weed	<i>Alternanthera philoxeroides</i>	2 August 2017
Asiatic tearthumb	<i>Persicaria perfoliata</i>	3 August 2016
Balloon vine	<i>Cardiospermum grandiflorum</i>	15 August 2019
Broadleaf watermilfoil	<i>Myriophyllum heterophyllum</i>	2 August 2017
Broomsedge bluestem	<i>Andropogon virginicus</i>	15 August 2019
Chinese bushclover	<i>Lespedeza cuneata</i>	15 August 2019
Chinese tallow	<i>Triadica sebifera</i>	15 August 2019
Common milkweed	<i>Asclepias syriaca</i>	2 August 2017
Crimson fountaingrass	<i>Pennisetum setaceum</i>	2 August 2017
Eastern baccharis	<i>Baccharis halimifolia</i>	3 August 2016
Fanwort	<i>Cabomba caroliniana</i>	3 August 2016
Floating primrose-willow	<i>Ludwigia peploides</i>	3 August 2016
Golden wreath wattle	<i>Acacia saligna</i>	15 August 2019
Japanese hop	<i>Humulus scandens</i>	15 August 2019
Japanese stiltgrass	<i>Microstegium vimineum</i>	2 August 2017
Kudzu vine	<i>Pueraria lobata</i>	3 August 2016

Mesquite	<i>Prosopis juliflora</i>	15 August 2019
Perennial veldt grass	<i>Ehrharta calycina</i>	15 August 2019
Persian hogweed	<i>Heracleum persicum</i>	3 August 2016
Purple pampas grass	<i>Cortaderia jubata</i>	15 August 2019
Salvinia moss	<i>Salvinia molesta</i>	15 August 2019
Senegal tea plant	<i>Gymnocoronis spilanthoides</i>	15 August 2019
Sosnowsky's hogweed	<i>Heracleum sosnowskyi</i>	3 August 2016
Tree of Heaven	<i>Ailanthus altissima</i>	15 August 2019
Vine-like fern	<i>Lygodium japonicum</i>	15 August 2019
Water hyacinth	<i>Eichhornia crassipes</i>	3 August 2016
Water-primrose	<i>Ludwigia grandiflora</i>	3 August 2016
Whitetop weed	<i>Parthenium hysterophorus</i>	3 August 2016

Appendix two: List of non native plant species in Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

The following lists non-native species that are already established in the wild but continue to pose a conservation threat. These plants should not be released into the wild.

Schedule 9 Part II, plants

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, section 14

Common name	Scientific name
Fanwort	<i>Cabomba caroliniana</i>
Fern, Water	<i>Azolla filiculoides</i>
Fig, Hottentot	<i>Carpobrotus edulis</i>
Hogweed, Giant	<i>Heracleum mantegazzianum</i>
Hyacinth, water	<i>Eichhornia crassipes</i>
Kelp, Giant	<i>Macrocystis angustifolia</i>
Kelp, Giant	<i>Macrocystis integrifolia</i>
Kelp, Giant	<i>Macrocystis laevis</i>
Kelp, Giant	<i>Macrocystis pyrifera</i>
Kelp, Japanese	<i>Laminaria japonica</i>
Knotweed, Japanese	<i>Fallopia japonica (Polygonum cuspidatum)</i> Name changed in 2010
Leek, Few-flowered	<i>Allium paradoxum</i>
Lettuce, water	<i>Pistia stratiotes</i>
Parrot's-feather	<i>Myriophyllum aquaticum</i>
Pennywort, Floating	<i>Hydrocotyle ranunculoides</i>
Salvinia, Giant	<i>Salvinia molesta</i>
Seaweed, Californian Red	<i>Pikea californica</i>
Seaweed, Hooked Asparagus	<i>Asparagopsis armata</i>
Seaweed, Japanese	<i>Sargassum muticum</i>
Seaweeds, Laver (except native species)	<i>Porphyra spp except -</i> <i>P. amethystea</i> <i>P. leucosticta</i> <i>P. linearis</i> <i>P. miniata</i> <i>P. purpurea</i> <i>P. umbilicalis</i>
Shallon	<i>Gaultheria shallon</i>
Stonecrop, Australian swamp	<i>Crassula helmsii</i>
Wakame	<i>Undaria pinnatifida</i>
Waterweed, Curly	<i>Lagarosiphon major</i>

The following plants were added to Schedule 9 by The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Variation of Schedule 9) (England and Wales) Order 2010:

Common name	Scientific name
Alexanders, Perfoliate	<i>Smyrniium perfoliatum</i>
Algae, Red	<i>Grateloupia luxurians</i>
Archangel, Variegated Yellow	<i>Lamiastrum galeobdolon subsp. argentatum</i>
Azalea, Yellow	<i>Rhododendron luteum</i>
Balsam, Himalayan	<i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>
Cotoneaster	<i>Cotoneaster horizontalis</i>
Cotoneaster, Entire-leaved	<i>Cotoneaster integrifolius</i>
Cotoneaster, Himalayan	<i>Cotoneaster simonsii</i>
Cotoneaster, Hollyberry	<i>Cotoneaster bullatus</i>
Cotoneaster, Small-leaved	<i>Cotoneaster microphyllus</i>
Creeper, False Virginia	<i>Parthenocissus inserta</i>
Creeper, Virginia	<i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i>
Dewplant, Purple	<i>Disphyma crassifolium</i>
Fanwort (otherwise known as Carolina Water-Shield)	<i>Cabomba caroliniana</i>
Fern, Water	<i>Azolla filiculoides</i>
Fig, Hottentot	<i>Carpobrotus edulis</i>
Garlic, Three-cornered	<i>Allium triquetrum</i>
Hyacinth, Water	<i>Eichhornia crassipes</i>
Knotweed, Giant	<i>Fallopia sachalinensis</i>
Knotweed, Hybrid	<i>Fallopia japonica x Fallopia sachalinensis</i>
Knotweed, Japanese	<i>Fallopia japonica</i>
Leek, Few-flowered	<i>Allium paradoxum</i>
Lettuce, Water	<i>Pistia stratiotes</i>
Montbretia	<i>Crocsmia x crocosmiiflora</i>
Parrot's Feather	<i>Myriophyllum aquaticum</i>
Pennywort, Floating	<i>Hydrocotyle ranunculoides</i>
Potato, Duck	<i>Sagittaria latifolia</i>
Primrose, Floating Water	<i>Ludwigia peploides</i>
Primrose, Water	<i>Ludwigia grandiflora</i>
Primrose, Water	<i>Ludwigia uruguayensis</i>
Rhododendron	<i>Rhododendron ponticum</i>
Rhododendron	<i>Rhododendron ponticum x Rhododendron maximum</i>
Rhubarb, Giant	<i>Gunnera tinctoria</i>
Rose, Japanese	<i>Rosa rugosa</i>
Salvinia, Giant	<i>Salvinia molesta</i>
Seafingers, Green	<i>Codium fragile</i>

Stonecrop, Australian Swamp (otherwise known as New Zealand Pygmyweed)	<i>Crassula helmsii</i>
Waterweed, Curly	<i>Lagarosiphon major</i>
Waterweeds	<i>All species of the genus Elodea.</i>