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## Top 20 most recorded UK invasive plants

23 June 2020, by Matthew Appleby

A new citizen science project called Plant Alert is offering gardeners a way of reporting any ornamental plants showing signs of invasiveness.



*Japanese knotweed*

Citizen scientists have been using Plant Alert, a new long-term citizen science project designed to help prevent future invasions of ornamental plants run by the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland in collaboration with Coventry University and co-ordinated by Dr Katharina Dehnen-Schmutz and Dr Kevin Walker.

The most common invasives they have found so far are:

- *Leycesteria formosa* “Himalayan Honeysuckle”
- *Fallopia japonica* “Japanese Knotweed”

- *Pentaglottis sempervirens* “Green Alkanet”
- *Allium triquetrum* “Three-cornered Garlic”
- *Symphoricarpos albus* “Snowberry”
- *Impatiens glandulifera* “Himalayan Balsam”
- *Lamiastrum galeobdolon* subsp. *argentatum* “Felen Arianddail Marddanhadlen”
- *Crassula helmsii* “New Zealand Pigmyweed”
- *Erigeron karvinskianus* “Mexican Fleabane”
- *Pilosella aurantiaca* “Fox-and-cubs”
- *Rubus spectabilis* “Salmonberry”
- *Lamiastrum galeobdolon* “Yellow Archangel”
- *Lysichiton americanus* “American Skunk-cabbage”
- *Rhododendron ponticum* “Rhododendron”
- *Geranium macrorrhizum* “Rock Crane’s-bill”
- *Akebia quinata* “Five-leaf Akebia”
- *Acanthus mollis* “Bear’s-breech”
- *Soleirolia soleirolii* “Mind-your-own-business”
- *Gaultheria shallon* “Shallon”
- *Buddleja davidii* “Butterfly-bush”

Concerning traits include vigorous growth, prolific self-seeding, longer flowering periods and any plant which the gardener has to ‘keep on top of’ to prevent it spreading.

Plant Alert coordinator Dr Katharina Dehnen-Schmutz said: “Ornamental plants escaping from gardens are the main pathway for non-native plants outnumbering native plant species in the British flora, with some of them having high negative impacts on ecosystems, biodiversity and the built environment. While non-native plants play a vital role in gardens, the challenge now is to identify the small number of possible future invasive plants with potentially high negative impacts, out of the ever-increasing pool of about 70,000 ornamental plants available to gardeners.”

Plant Alert is a collaboration between the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland and Coventry University aimed at closing the ‘invasion debt gap’; the time between a plant being introduced into the garden, to when it has escaped into the wider environment where it can out-compete our native wild species.

Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland science head Kevin Walker said: “Bitter experience has shown that species that are invasive in gardens are also the ones that are

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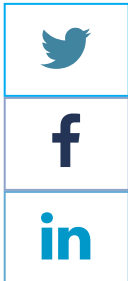
likely to 'jump the garden fence' and cause problems in the wild; usually because they can regenerate very effectively and grow vigorously, outcompeting native species. The most effective way to reduce the impacts of these species is to identify them before they escape into wild - this is exactly what this project aims to achieve. Armed with this information we can then alert others to the threats they pose allowing policies to be put in place to prevent their sale and implement eradication programmes in case they do manage to escape.”

App:

<https://plantalert.org/app/list/survey/welcome>

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