

# Policeman's Helmet

*Impatiens glandulifera*

Touch-Me-Not Family

## Class B Noxious Weed: Control Required

### Identification Tips

- Annual that grows from 3 to 8 feet tall
- Hollow, upright stems with purple or reddish tinge
- Irregular five-parted flowers resemble 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

### Biology

- Flowers from mid-June through October
- Reproduces by seeds; 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

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

### Questions?

King County Noxious Weed Control  
Program Line: 206-296-0290  
[www.kingcounty.gov/weeds](http://www.kingcounty.gov/weeds)



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



*Policeman's helmet takes over riparian areas, pushing out native and beneficial plants.*

## 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 on public lands, please report the location to our 24-hour program information line at 206-296-0290.

## Control Methods

For best results, control methods should be adaptive and employed through several growing seasons.

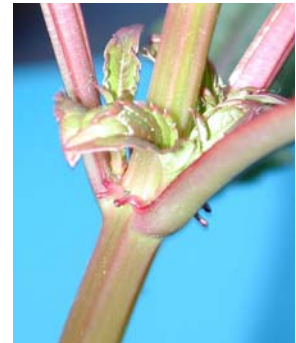
**Manual:** For small sites, pull or dig up plants, making sure to get all of the root. Policeman's helmet is an annual plant with relatively shallow roots that can be pulled easily during all life stages. If leaving the plants on site, crush the stems by walking on them to prevent regrowth. If the plant is in seed, carefully place a plastic bag around the entire flower head cluster to prevent the seeds from escaping. Cut off the flower head and put the bag in the regular trash.

**Mechanical:** Brush cutting tools and mowers are effective and will reduce the risk of disturbance and erosion. However, be advised that mowed or cut plants may re-sprout later in the season. Be sure to follow up with either hand-pulling or additional mowing treatments.

**Chemical:** Herbicides can be effective on large infestations of policeman's helmet where accessibility of equipment is limited. Using herbicides on isolated plants and small sites is not recommended since the plants are hollow-stemmed annuals that are easily pulled. **Certain herbicides cannot be used in aquatic areas or their buffers. All aquatic herbicides are restricted-use herbicides. Purchase and application can only be done by licensed aquatic applicators.** Should you determine that herbicides are allowable on the site, follow labels exactly as written. Products containing glyphosate (such as Roundup) are most effective if applied to actively growing plants. Glyphosate is absorbed by the growing leaves. However, glyphosate is "non-selective" and will injure any foliage that it comes in contact with, so make sure not to drip on desirable plants. Selective broadleaf herbicides with the active ingredient triclopyr, 2,4-D or metsulfuron work well for lawn or grasslands as they won't harm most grasses. When using this type of herbicide or one with glyphosate, do not cut down the treated plants until they have died completely. This can take two weeks or more. Chemical control options may differ for private, commercial and government agency users. For questions about herbicide use, contact the King County Noxious Weed Control Program.



*Don't be fooled: these pretty flowers belong to an invasive weed.*



*Close-up of stem and glands.*



*Policeman's helmet can be dried out and composted on site; however, plants with developing seed capsules should be bagged and put into the trash to prevent seeds from spreading.*



**King County**

Department of Natural Resources and Parks  
Water and Land Resources Division  
**Noxious Weed Control Program**  
206-296-0290 TTY Relay: 711

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