



## CASE STUDIES - ESPC Target 10

Management plans in place for at least 100 major alien species that threaten plants, plant communities and ecosystems

### Rapid Risk Assessment Screening for invasive plants

GSPC Target 10 (ESPC targets 2.21-22)

<b>Relevant species or habitats</b>	Non-native aquatic plant species on sale in Britain and non-native terrestrial plant species increasing in distribution; broad range of native plants and habitats
<b>Project coordinators :</b>	Plantlife International (UK)
<b>Partner organisations :</b>	Royal Horticultural Society, Freshwater Biological Association
<b>Funding mechanisms</b>	Funded by UK Trusts and Foundations



1. Parrot feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*) 2 & 3. *Azolla filiculoides*

### Description

Eradication of some of the most pernicious and widespread non-native invasive plants in Great Britain is now unlikely. For such species, control at important botanical sites and invasive-free zones is perhaps the most appropriate goal (see separate case study). Meanwhile, it is possible to take preventative action to tackle species with the potential to become invasive but which are not yet causing problems in the wild. Such action depends upon our ability to identify species likely to cause problems in the future.

Britain's Non-Native Species Secretariat's Risk Analysis Mechanism is used to assess the risk posed by non-native invasive species to Britain's natural habitats and native species. But it takes several hours to complete a species risk analysis and no plant assessments have yet been published.

Based on the Weed Risk Assessment tool kit (Pheloung et al. 1999) (adopted for Defra for use in the UK), Plantlife developed a Rapid Risk Assessment designed to be able to screen large numbers of species quickly in order to identify their potential to become invasive. This is a 'flagging up' process only and species scoring highly on the risk assessment will be put forward to the Secretariat for further, more comprehensive analysis.

Over 60% of invasive plants found in natural habitats in Britain are thought to have originated from gardens. This being so, we assessed almost 500 non-native aquatic plants known to be on sale in Britain as well as 220 terrestrial plants that are increasing in the wild but which are not yet the object of government concern.

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## Description (II)

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The questions that make up the Rapid Risk Assessment include:

- To what climate is the species suited?
- Is it an environmental weed in natural and valued habitats/designated sites?
- Has the species become naturalised where grown (globally)?
- Does the species have a history of repeated cultivation (and associated introductions) in the UK?
- Is the species naturalised beyond its native range?
- Is it a congeneric weed?
- It is unpalatable to grazing animals?
- Can it tolerate a wide range of soil conditions?
- Does it have a climbing or smothering growth habit, and/or form dense thickets?
- Does/can it produce viable seed in the UK; is seed production prolific, is there evidence that a persistent propagule bank is formed?
- What is its minimum generative time?
- Are propagules likely to be dispersed by wind/water/animal; unintentionally/intentionally by people or as a produce contaminant?
- Does it tolerate or benefit from mutilation/cultivation/herbicides?

Once species of concern have been identified, swift preventative action can be taken to eradicate them in the wild. The results of the screening process will be published in 2009.

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<b>Date of case study</b>	2008-2009
<b>Citations and Publications</b>	P.C. Pheloung, P.A. Williams and S.R. Halloy (1999) Weed Risk Assessment (WRA) tool kit
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### Other related links:

[http://www.nonnativespecies.org/04\\_Risk\\_Assessments.cfm](http://www.nonnativespecies.org/04_Risk_Assessments.cfm)

