

NOXIOUS WEED ALERT

POLICEMAN'S HELMET (POOR MAN'S ORCHID)

(Impatiens glandulifera)

- Policeman's helmet grows up to 10 feet tall.
- The stems are hollow and bamboo-like with a purplish tinge.
- The leaves are oval with serrated edges.
- The flowers, which bloom from June to October, range in color from white to pink to purple, and the shape resembles an old-fashioned English policeman's helmet. (Or an orchid; an alternative common name is "poor man's orchid.")
- The mature seeds eject up to 20 feet from the seed pod when touched or disturbed.



Distribution:

Policeman's helmet grows in many locations throughout Clallam County, all ornamental plantings. It was widely sold in the county prior to 1999, when it was added to the Noxious Weed List.

WHY BE CONCERNED?

- Policeman's helmet is extremely invasive; it grows particularly well in moist, riparian or wetland areas where it can out-compete native vegetation.
- Because it is an annual, it dies down in the winter, leaving no food or habitat for wildlife, normally supplied by native vegetation.

**Policeman's helmet is a Class B
designate weed.**

**Control is required in Clallam
County.**

Ecology:

- Policeman's helmet requires high soil moisture, and will grow in partial shade.
- An annual, it reproduces entirely by seed.
- One plant can produce up to 800 seeds; when the seed pod is mature it splits, ejecting seeds up to 20 feet. The seeds travel along waterways and can germinate under water; they remain viable for 18 months or more.

CONTROL

Prevention and early detection are the best means of control.

- **Do not buy** or plant policeman's helmet.
- **Avoid** introducing soil or gravel from areas known to have policeman's helmet.
- **Remove** seedlings when young because they can usually be pulled easily. and they have not had an opportunity to reproduce.
- **Replant** newly weeded area with a desirable (preferably native) plant species, to discourage reinfestation.
- **Dispose** of weeds properly, bag or burn seed pods (carefully!).
- **Monitor** the site for several years; promptly remove new seedlings.

HANDPULLING is effective, because policeman's helmet is an annual with a shallow root system. Seeds present in the soil will continue to germinate for up to two years, so the site should be monitored and seedlings removed.

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL:

It is reported that sheep and cattle graze the whole plant in Britain.

HERBICIDES can be effective but should be applied with care. Read the label to check that you are applying an herbicide in the right place, to the right plant, at the right time, and in the right amount.

Warning: Policeman's helmet often grows close to water and any herbicide application near or over water requires a permit from the Department of Ecology and a specially licensed applicator.