

Rhododendron ponticum controlling methods

Chemical treatments

Chemical treatment is undertaken using a glyphosate based herbicide (such as Roundup Probiactive). Various methods of application are possible:

Stem treatment (cut and inject)

This is an increasingly well regarded control method, particularly suitable for mature stands of *Rhododendron*. It requires little in the way of equipment and has very little impact on the surrounding habitat. Plants can be left to die in situ, providing habitats with protection from browsing and reinfestation from any neighbouring seed sources. The steadily decreasing cover and shade allows for a gradual and natural regeneration of native habitats. It is also a desirable control method for employment around waterbodies. An initial treatment will typically kill 75-95% of plants in a heavily infested area in a single visit. Follow up treatments such as foliar spraying, manual removal or further stem injection will complete the clearance of a site.

Foliar spraying

Foliar spraying is an efficient method for low, straggling bushes unsuitable for stem treatment. **We aim to keep foliar spraying to a minimum to reduce impacts on natural systems.**

Chainsaw and stump treatment

This is a method often employed in *Rhododendron* control, where stands require immediate removal. Stumps are drilled and injected with herbicide, where it is not possible to dig them up.

Manual removal

A low impact control method requiring only hand tools, it is useful for the removal of small bushes and has the obvious advantage of not requiring herbicides.

Plant swap scheme

As part of control programmes, we have been successful in securing funding to offer funding for a plant swap scheme. This is aimed at property owners who volunteer to have the *Rhododendron ponticum* removed from their gardens and shelterbelts. We replace the invasive plants with sterile cultivars of *Rhododendron* species or other non-invasive ornamental plants. We are developing plans to create a resource of native plants suitable for gardens and shelterbelts.

Other invasive non-native plant species

There are a number of other invasive plants threatening Scottish habitats. Manta Ecology offers services in the control of Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam, American skunk cabbage and a range of invasive shrubs such as *cotoneaster* species. The surveillance of garden escapes which may in time prove invasive is an important part of our approach to habitat protection, plants such as montbretia (crocasmia) have the potential to prove invasive.