



Ymddiriedolaeth Natur
Gogledd Cymru
North Wales
Wildlife Trust



PLANT PROFILE

Rhododendron

INVASIVE

FACTS

ID

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Species description

Scientific name:

Rhododendron ponticum

Native to:

The Iberian Peninsula and south-eastern Europe, towards the Caucasus.

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Treftadaeth
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Fund



Mewn Partneriaeth â
Llywodraeth Cymru
In Partnership with
Welsh Government



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ID

TAKE
ACTION

TIPS

MORE
PROFILES

Interesting facts



Impacts:

Rhododendron forms dense thickets that shade out native plants and inhibits regeneration of native woodland trees. Rhododendron is poisonous to animals (including pollinators) and humans. It can harbour diseases that negatively affect native trees.

Eryri National Park alone spent around **£2.2 million** between 2018 - 2024 managing it.

Habitat:

Grows on acid, peaty or sandy soils in woodland, heathland, rocky hillsides, derelict gardens and riverbanks.

An evergreen shrub, densely branched, that spreads over large areas. Introduced to Britain in 1763 and first recorded in the wild by 1849 and is now widely distributed.

How it spreads:

Seeds are dispersed by wind and water. It also spreads through layering of branches on the ground. Each flower head can produce between three thousand and seven thousand seeds.



TOP

FACTS

ID

TAKE
ACTION

TIPS

MORE
PROFILES

Key identification features



Leaves arranged in a spiral at the end of the stem.



Flower bud.

10-15 violet to purple funnel shaped flowers in spring. Each flower has five petals.



Leathery leaves with dull green upper surface. 6-12cm long.

Woody capsules develop after flowering and contain seeds.



Woody stems up to 15cm in diameter and 5m tall.



TOP

FACTS

ID

TAKE
ACTION

TIPS

MORE
PROFILES

Take action

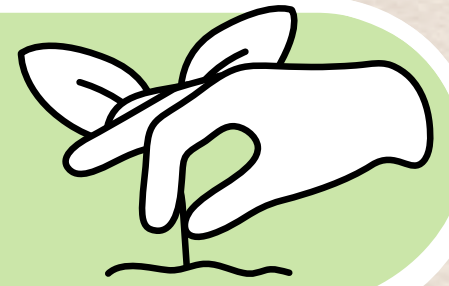
Help **stop** the **spread!**



Remove mature plants by digging, taking care to remove the roots.



Remove seedlings by hand-pulling or digging.



Do not compost seedheads at home, use council garden waste facilities.

Explore our tips for alternative plant ideas.



TOP

FACTS

ID

TAKE
ACTION

TIPS

MORE
PROFILES

Handy tips

Legislation

Rhododendron ponticum is listed as an invasive species on [Schedule 9](#) of the [Wildlife and Countryside Act \(1981\)](#). It is an **offence to plant or cause to grow in the wild**.

Gardeners possessing this plant should undertake measures to help **stop the spread** from their gardens into the wild.

Similar species:

Not to be confused with another invasive species, cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*).



Cherry laurel

Alternative plant ideas

Non-native

Common camellia
(*Camellia japonica*)

Christmas berry 'Red robin'
(*Photinia × fraseri*)

Burkwood viburnum
(*Viburnum × burkwoodii*)

Burkwood
viburnum



TOP

Photos: NWWT Lisa Toth and RHS Mark Winwood.

Illustrations: David Setter @doodleplanet and starfishonline.co.uk

Information collated from: GB NNSS, BSBI and RHS.