



**Invasive Plant Species  
on Stoney Creek Trail**



**Himalayan blackberry**  
(*Rubus armeniacus*)



**Cutleaf blackberry**  
(*Rubus laciniatus*)

There are a total of 175 recorded invasive plants species in B.C. Most of the following information was taken from the website of the [Invasive Species Council of BC](#) and Wikipedia.

**Himalayan blackberry** is well established in the lower mainland. It is valued for its delicious berries, but it easily invades disturbed sites and is very hard to contain. It crowds out low-growing vegetation and creates dense thickets that give good hiding places for small animals, but limit the movement of large ones. It spreads by roots and stem fragments, as well as by birds and animals that eat the berries and disperse the seeds. Himalayan blackberry canes can grow up 12 m long and take root wherever they touch the ground.

Cutting the canes, burning the thickets or the use of herbicides are ineffective removal strategies. The most effective way is very labour intensive: digging up the roots. Even then, root fragments can resprout.

**Cutleaf blackberry** is a deciduous bramble with prickly shoots growing as much as 3 m tall. The unusual leaves are compound, with five leaflets deeply divided into subleaflets that have jagged, thorny tips. The flowers have pink or white petals. Fruits are similar to the common blackberry, with a unique, fruitier flavour. They are eagerly consumed by a number of animal species, including many birds and mammals. The thickets provide valuable cover for small animals. Unfortunately, like the Himalayan blackberry, it can quickly grow out of control.



**Creeping buttercup**  
*(Ranunculus repens)*

**Creeping buttercup** is a very common weed of agricultural land and gardens. It is considered an invasive species due to its ability to spread rapidly and outcompete native vegetation. It spreads quickly by its horizontal branches taking root and resisting removal because of a deeply anchored root ball. It prefers moist soils and is often found in meadows, fields, and along waterways. The leaves are three-lobed, dark green and white-spotted. The flowers have five golden yellow, glossy petals and are borne on long stalks.

Like most buttercups, it is poisonous, and should be handled with care. It has an acrid taste and blisters the mouth, so livestock will avoid eating it. The toxin degrades by drying, so hay containing buttercups is safe.



**Canada thistle**  
*(Cirsium arvense)*

**Canada thistle**, despite its common name, is native to Europe and North Asia. It is commonly found growing on roadsides, cultivated fields, pastures, logged forests, riverbanks, and other disturbed areas where it also out-grows native species. It spreads by its creeping roots and forms thick infestations that crowd out forage grasses, reducing crop yields and production.

It grows up to 2 m tall and has shiny green leaves with sharp, spiny edges and white hairs on the underside. It bears clusters of up to five pompom-like flowers with a faint vanilla scent. Seeds are parachute-type, like a dandelion's. Its sap is very attractive to insects. You can discern Canada thistle from all similar species by its smooth main stem and small flowers.



**Cleavers**  
**(*Galium aparine*)**

**Cleavers** is a native annual with creeping, straggling stems that are square in cross section. They attach themselves to other plants with the small hooked hairs which grow out of the stems and leaves. The rough, hairy leaves grow in whorls of six to eight. It has tiny, star-shaped, white to greenish flowers which emerge from early spring to summer. The burrlike seeds are produced in pairs. Commonly known as bedstraw, cleavers is particularly damaging to field crops as it clings to and trails around the plants. It prefers moist or heavy soils.

Cleavers is an edible plant. The leaves and stems of the plant can be cooked as a leaf vegetable if gathered before the fruits appear.



**English ivy**  
**(*Hedera helix*)**

**English ivy** is commonly planted to provide quick cover for walls and buildings, and as ground cover in commercial landscapes. Unfortunately, it quickly forms a dense mat that suppresses native plants. English ivy grows rapidly and needs very little light or water once it is established. It even grows during the winter.

English ivy plants will often have two different types of waxy, leathery leaves visible on the vines. New leaves have three to five points, almost “star-shaped”, while older leaves will be egg-shaped. Both sets of leaves can range from 5-10 cm long and 6-12 cm wide and can have range of different colors: dark green, silver-green, yellow, white. Clusters of small white to yellow-green flowers bloom in late summer and early fall and are followed by clusters of black shiny fruit.



**Common periwinkle**  
(*Vinca minor*)

**Common periwinkle** is a small evergreen, vine-like plant having glossy dark green leaves with a leathery texture. It has white or purple five petalled, solitary flowers roughly 10 cm in diameter. Its stem spreads along the ground, taking root in places, but never twining or climbing.

It has been used as groundcover in gardens. Due its rapid growth and its ability to withstand poor growing conditions, common periwinkle continues to spread through BC. It inhabits open to shady sites including forests and often escapes from old homesites.

Periwinkle grows vigorously and forms dense and extensive mats along the forest floor, displacing native herbaceous and woody plant species.



**Foxglove**  
(*Digitalis purpurea*)

**Foxglove** is an extremely abundant exotic biennial that has naturalized throughout the province, leading many to believe this plant is a BC native. Found growing along roadsides, waste areas and forests, a single foxglove plant can produce 5,000 seeds each season.

Every part of this plant (including the seeds) is extremely poisonous. In fact, the compound digitalis, used in heart medication, was originally sourced from the foxglove plant because of the effects it has on the cardiac system when ingested.

Foxgloves have long, sturdy stems covered in tubular, bell-shaped flowers. Inside the flowers are many speckles that pollinators use as a invitation to land. At the base of the plant is a rosette of hairy dark green leaves. A foxglove plant can range up to 1.5 m in height.



**Himalayan balsam**  
(*Impatiens glandulifera*)

**Himalayan balsam** balsam is also known as Policeman's helmet. This noxious weed, originally from South Asia, can take over areas with moist soils, including stream- and river-banks. It dominates because it produces a large quantity of plant nectar which is more attractive to bees and other pollinating insects than that of native plants. As well, its seed pods, when ripe, can explode or shoot seeds as far as 7 m.

Himalayan balsam grows from 0.6 to 2 m tall and has purplish hollow stems with many branches. Its flowers range in colour from white, to pink and purple. They are hooded in shape giving them the appearance of traditional English police helmets.



**Yellow archangel**  
(*Lamium galeobdolon*)

**Yellow archangel** is a perennial garden plant usually used in hanging baskets and as a ground cover. It grows to a height of up to 80 cm. It prefers shady sites such as forested areas. It has underground runners and grows in a dense mat that smothers other native plants. It spreads by seed and plant fragments, and by catching a ride on animals and humans passing through the vegetation.

Yellow archangel has a stem with a square cross-section that grows from 30 cm to 60 cm in height. Small, yellow flowers grow in a clump close to the stem. The leaves are hairy, oval to heart-shaped with toothed edges, and dark green with an outer silver lining.



**Tansy ragwort**  
**(*Senecio jacobaea*)**

**Tansy ragwort** is a biennial or short-lived perennial that grows in pasturelands and disturbed areas. It has erect stems .3 m to 1.2 m tall. Its leaves, deeply cut into irregular segments, give the plant a “ragged” appearance. The yellow flowers form in a flat-topped cluster. Its plentiful nectar makes it attractive to a wide range of insects such as solitary bees, hover flies and butterflies. The seeds are easily transported by wind, human activity and livestock. A single plant can produce 150,000 seeds that can survive in the soil for up to 15 years.

Tansy ragwort contains a toxic alkaloid which can cause liver damage in grazing animals.



**Curled dock**  
**(*Rumex crispus*)**

**Curled dock** is a perennial in the Buckwheat Family. This noxious weed grows up to 1.5 m tall in disturbed areas. It has a deeply penetrating taproot. Its dark green basal leaves, wavy along the edges, turn a rusty-red colour when mature. A single plant produces 3,000 to 4,000 shiny brown seeds which are encased, enabling them to float on water or get caught in clothing or animal fur, helping the seeds spread to new locations