

Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) – Information Sheet



Introduction:

Japanese knotweed is a non-native invasive plant that was brought to Britain from the Far East in the mid-nineteenth century as an ornamental garden plant. It has become widespread in the wild and causes serious problems by displacing native flora and causing structural damage. No viable seed has been recorded in the UK except as a result of hybridisation. This means the plant regenerates not only via an extensive and rapidly growing rhizome system but also from fresh stem material. As little as 10mm in length or 0.7g fresh weight of rhizome will allow knotweed to regenerate and form a new plant.

Description: The stems are green with red or purple specks, hollow and similar to bamboo, and can grow up to 2-3m tall, forming dense cane-like clumps. The leaves are green, shield or heart-shaped, with a flat base and are up to 12cm long. Clusters of creamy flowers appear on the tips of most stems from August to October but produce sterile seeds. The roots consist of rhizomes, which are yellow when cut, but can spread to a depth of 3m and radius of 7m.

What to do if you have Japanese knotweed in your garden:

- Deal with any Japanese knotweed rapidly to prevent its spread to neighbouring areas and property.
- If the knotweed is tall and/or impenetrable then cut back the stems in winter when they have died (as shown in Picture 2: the stems will dry to a deep brown colour), but be extremely careful & use a hand scythe to avoid spreading the stem fragments. Dispose of all material safely & responsibly either by burning on site, or at a licensed landfill site. This will allow effective spray contact with the emergent growth the following spring.
- Spray new growth/plants at least once a year, but ideally twice in spring and late summer/autumn, using a non-persistent, general-purpose herbicide e.g. Glyphosate. There are many trade names for weed killers containing glyphosate such as Roundup. The best and most effective time to spray is late summer/autumn, when the plant is flowering and the foliage is conducting the most nutrients to the rhizome to build food reserves. Ensure reputable Japanese knotweed contractors are used and are licensed to carry out chemical control.
- Japanese knotweed stems will die back in winter but chemical control usually takes a minimum of three years to totally eradicate this invasive plant. Therefore the knotweed must still be regarded as infective within that three year period, or whilst regrowth still occurs during spring.



1. Japanese knotweed can form dense clumps

2. The cane-like stems die-back but still persist over the winter

3. Distinctive heart-shaped leaves

For more information on the “Code of conduct on non-native invasive plants” see: www.defra.gov.uk or for guidance on the management, destruction and disposal of knotweed see: www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Japanese Knotweed and the Law:

- Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) – It is an offence to plant, or cause knotweed to grow in the wild.
- Environmental Protection Act (1990) – Cut knotweed material and soil containing rhizome material are classified as controlled waste and must be disposed of safely at a licensed landfill site, if removed from the site of origin.
- Third party litigation – Landowners can be sued for costs and damages if they fail to prevent knotweed from spreading to a neighbouring property. Also failure to manage and dispose of Japanese knotweed responsibly may lead to prosecution.

Japanese Knotweed Contractors:

There are many companies that now deal with controlling and eradicating Japanese knotweed. For a full list of reputable contractors, please use the Internet and a search engine such as ‘Google’ and type in ‘Japanese knotweed contractors’.