



# Amenity Forum Guidance Document

## Best Practice Note for Japanese Knotweed Control

Japanese Knotweed is covered under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act and is one of the most invasive plants in Great Britain. Under this Act, it is an offence to cause the plant to spread or grow in the wild. Landowners may also be subject to enforcement under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing bill.

Plant material and soils containing root material is classed as controlled waste for the purposes of the Environment Protection Act and must be disposed of at a licensed landfill site in accordance with the Act. This applies whether the material is alive or dead.

In practice, the plant is often best left on the site after spraying, as removal and disposal is often expensive and difficult, with potential to cross-contaminate new areas through the spread of plant propagules.

Japanese knotweed is a perennial which forms an extensive underground rhizome (root system). It can colonise most habitats and grow through walls, tarmac and weaknesses in concrete. It is characterised through its fleshy red or bright green asparagus-like shoots in spring, which grow from its network of underground rhizomes.

By June, stems can grow up to 3 metres, bearing small, cream-coloured flowers from July or early August. The plant dies back at first frosts but bare stems remain over winter, providing insulation for the root system and making identification relatively easy year-round.

The term Japanese knotweed applies principally to the species *Fallopia japonica* but may also refer to

- dwarf Japanese knotweed – *Fallopia japonica*, var. *compacta*
- giant knotweed – *Fallopia sachalinensis*
- Bohemian knotweed – *Fallopia x bohemica*
- Himalayan knotweed - *Polygonum polystachum*

Most Japanese knotweed seeds are non-viable, as all known *Fallopia japonica* plants in the UK are female clones. Japanese knotweed can cross-breed with giant knotweed, forming Bohemian knotweed, which may itself produce viable seeds.

The plant spreads almost exclusively by fragments of rhizome and stem transported by humans or through watercourses, roads or railways. Even the smallest piece of stem or rhizome can produce fresh plants.

Guidelines for control involve the use of cultural, mechanical and chemical control in an integrated manner. However, in practice, neither cutting, pulling or indeed, grazing are effective methods of control in the medium term – especially due to the potential for cross-contamination. Attempts by CABI at introducing biological control (a psyllid aphid) are in progress.

If Japanese knotweed is recognised, the first step should be containment by good hygiene practice combined with a chemical eradication programme. It is also important to regularly monitor sites since re-treatment is often necessary.

Herbicide treatment options include foliar spray, stem injection or leaf-wiping. Herbicide application is generally most effective in August and September – after flowering but before die-back. Application early in the year may result in stunted “bonsai” growth, which can make the plant less susceptible to further treatment.

Consult your agronomist or supplier for advice on suitable herbicides and their usage restrictions and directions for use. It is important to note that relevant Environment Agency approval is required before use in aquatic areas. Of the above, only glyphosate can be used in such areas.

**Further Reading:**

Environment Agency code of practice: Managing Japanese Knotweed on Development Sites (the knotweed code of practice)

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/296930/LIT\\_2695\\_df1209.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/296930/LIT_2695_df1209.pdf)

UK Government Guidance Note on the reform of anti-social behaviour powers

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/364846/Japanese\\_Knotweed\\_information\\_note.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/364846/Japanese_Knotweed_information_note.pdf)