Information leaflet

Japanese Knotweed

Introduction

Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica var japonica* is a non-native invasive species of plant. Since it was introduced into the UK as an ornamental garden plant in the mid-nineteenth century it has spread across the UK, particularly along watercourses, transport routes and infested waste areas.

Plants within their native range are usually controlled by a variety of natural pests and diseases. When these plants are introduced into new areas that are free from these pests and diseases, they can become larger and more vigorous. They invade natural habitats and out-compete the native plants and animals that normally live there. Rivers, hedges, roadsides and railways form important corridors for native plants and animals to migrate, and large infestations of non-native weeds can block these routes for wildlife.

Japanese knotweed isn't just a problem for our native wildlife. The vigorous growth can damage buildings and hard surfaces. Once established underneath or around the built environment, it can be particularly hard to control. Riverside Japanese knotweed damages flood defence structures and reduces the capacity of channels to carry floodwater.

Advice for Residents

The underlying problem for local authorities is that although there is an Environment Agency (EA) Code of Practice on managing Japanese knotweed infestations (which is aimed primarily at developers rather than individual residents) currently there is no clear and specific Government policy on what advice should be provided to residents in relation to managing the problem.

- All the advice given by the EA states that when it is identified, Japanese Knotweed should ideally be dealt with on-site and definitely not taken elsewhere for disposal (unless there are special circumstances).

- When identified within its own parks and open spaces, even the council itself does not remove the weed owing to the dangers of contaminating other areas during the removal and transfer process. Instead it is treated intensively on site with the relevant systemic herbicide and allowed to die off naturally, which can take several years, depending upon the scale of the infestation.

- For the reasons referred to above, the council's waste disposal facility in Wandsworth will not accept Japanese Knotweed; so even if the council were to offer to collect the material from residents' properties, we would have nowhere to dispose of it and would risk contaminating other areas.

- Residents should therefore be advised to follow the same advice wherever possible.

In view of the likelihood of the above, the following policy should form the basis of advice provided to residents contacting the council about Japanese Knotweed problems from this point on.

Japanese Knotweed – what the Law says:

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

Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) – It is an offence to plant, or cause knotweed to grow in the wild.

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.

You can obtain further 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

I Am A Property Developer Or Large Landowner – What Do I Need To Do If I Have Japanese Knotweed On Site?

For all advice and guidance please refer to www.defra.gov.uk or www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Japanese Knotweed – What Residents Need To Know.

Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica)* is a fast growing non – native invasive plant that has caused concern Nationwide as it can be both detrimental to both native flora and fauna and may also cause structural damage.

The plant spreads by a rampant rhizomous root system and is able to regenerate from fresh stems. The seed is not fertile. A piece of root as small as a little finger nail is able to regenerate, this makes safe disposal of the plant very difficult without contamination during transfer. In winter, the stems may appear to be dead but the plant is still alive and will rapidly increase in growth the following spring.

How To Recognise Japanese Knotweed

Picture 1

Picture 2

Picture 3

Picture 1 shows new emergence –soft fleshy reddish heart shaped leaves.

Picture 2 shows a developed plant with green heart shaped leaves that can reach 10 to 12 cm long and green stems that are speckled red/purple. The plant is clump forming and has hollow stems that can grow up to 3 metres high. In August it produces clusters of creamy flowers on the stem tips.
The rhizomous roots are a reddish colour on the outside and yellow/white when cut. They are able to spread to a depth of 3 metres. The spread is infinite.

Picture 3 shows Japanese knotweed in a dormant state. The stems turn brown and it gives the impression that the plant is dead, whilst the root system is storing energy for a new rampant emergence in the spring.

What You Should Do If You Discover Japanese Knotweed In Your Garden.

Act quickly to prevent any spread into neighboring property.

Ideally, the infestation should be dealt with on-site using a glyphosate based systemic weed killer. However should it be necessary to remove material, cut back mature stems with hand tools to help prevent spread and dispose of safely and responsibly at a licensed landfill site. Alternatively you can use a licensed contractor to remove the waste for you. Only use reputable contractors who carry a license to treat Japanese Knotweed.

When there is new growth and two leaves have formed, use a glyphosate based systemic weed killer, there are several products available on the market for domestic householders.

It is recommended that for effective eradication, the systemic glyphosate may need to be applied every 4 – 6 weeks between May to September, for a period of 2 – 3 years. Although the stems may present as dead during the winter, the plant should be assumed active and alive until the end of the 3 year period and when new emergence has ceased.

Please note that the council is unable to collect and dispose of any material containing Japanese Knotweed under any circumstances, either from residential or commercial properties. Where it is absolutely necessary to remove the material from site, only licensed contractors should be used.