

Japanese Knotweed

Fallopia japonica

Buckwheat family (Polygonaceae)

NATIVE RANGE

Eastern Asia



DESCRIPTION

Japanese knotweed is an upright, shrublike, herbaceous perennial that can grow to over 10 feet in height. As with all members of this family, the base of the stem above each joint is surrounded by a membranous sheath. Stems of Japanese knotweed are smooth, stout and swollen at joints where the leaf meets the stem. Although leaf size may vary, they are normally about 6 inches long by 3 to 4 inches wide, broadly oval to somewhat triangular and pointed at the tip. The minute greenish-white flowers occur in attractive, branched sprays in summer and are followed soon after by small winged fruits. Seeds are triangular, shiny, and very small, about 1/10 inch long.

Japanese knotweed is designated a noxious weed in the State of Washington.

ECOLOGICAL THREAT

Japanese knotweed spreads quickly to form dense thickets that exclude native vegetation and greatly alter natural ecosystems. It poses a significant threat to riparian areas, where it can survive severe floods and is able to rapidly colonize scoured shores and islands. Once established, populations are extremely persistent.



DISTRIBUTION IN THE UNITED STATES

Current distribution of Japanese knotweed includes 36 states in the lower 48 from Maine to Wisconsin south to Louisiana, and scattered midwest and western states. It is not currently known to occur in Hawaii.

HABITAT IN THE UNITED STATES

Japanese knotweed can tolerate a variety of adverse conditions including full shade, high temperatures, high salinity, and drought. It is found near water sources, such as along streams and rivers, in low-lying areas, waste places, utility rights-of-way, and around old homesites. It can quickly become an invasive pest in natural areas after escaping from cultivated gardens.

BACKGROUND

Japanese knotweed was probably introduced to the U.S. in the late 1800's. Also known as crimson beauty, Mexican bamboo, Japanese fleece flower, or Reynoutria, it was first introduced as an ornamental and has also been used for erosion control and for landscape screening. It is now found throughout the eastern U.S., in several western states, and Alaska, which has few exotic invasive plants to date.

BIOLOGY & SPREAD

Japanese knotweed spreads primarily by vegetative means with the help of its long, stout rhizomes. It is often transported to new sites as a contaminant in fill dirt seeds, sometimes distributed by water, and carried to a lesser extent by the wind. Escapees from neglected gardens, and discarded cuttings are common routes of dispersal from urban areas.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Grubbing is effective for small initial populations or environmentally sensitive areas where herbicides cannot be used. Using a pulaski or similar digging tool, remove the entire plant including all roots and runners. Juvenile plants can be hand pulled depending on soil conditions and root development. Any portions of the root system not removed will potentially

resprout. All plant parts (including mature fruit) should be bagged and disposed of in a trash dumpster to prevent reestablishment.

Chemical

Cut stem application

Use this method in areas where plants are established within or around non-target plants or where vines have grown into the canopy. This treatment remains effective at low temperatures as long as the ground is not frozen. Cut the stem about 2 inches above ground level. Immediately apply a 25% solution of glyphosate (e.g., Roundup®, or use Rodeo® if applying in or near wetland areas) or triclopyr (e.g., Garlon®) and water to the cross-section of the stem. A subsequent foliar application of glyphosate may be required to control new seedlings and resprouts.



Foliar application

Use this method to control large populations. It may be necessary to precede foliar applications with stump treatments to reduce the risk of damaging non-target species. Apply a 2% solution of glyphosate or triclopyr and water to thoroughly wet all foliage. Do not apply so heavily that herbicide will drip off leaves. A 0.5% non-ionic surfactant is recommended in order to penetrate the leaf cuticle, and ambient air temperature should be above 65 °F.

USE PESTICIDES WISELY: Always read the entire pesticide label carefully, follow all mixing and application instructions and wear all recommended personal protective gear and clothing. Contact your state department of agriculture for any additional pesticide use requirements, restrictions or recommendations.

NOTICE: mention of pesticide products on this page does not constitute endorsement of any material.

CONTACT

For more information on the management of Japanese knotweed, please contact:

- Kris Johnson, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Gatlinburg, TN
- Japanese Knotweed Alliance, http://www.cabi-bioscience.org/html/japanese_knotweed_alliance.htm
- Robert J. Richardson, Aquatic and Noncropland Weed Management, Crop Science Department, Box 7620, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC 27695-7620, (919) 515-5653, Rob_Richardson at ncsu.edu

SUGGESTED ALTERNATIVE PLANTS

Many attractive native herbs and shrubs are available that make excellent alternatives to Japanese knotweed. Contact the native plant society in your state for more information.

OTHER LINKS

- <http://www.invasive.org/search/action.cfm?q=Polygonum%20cuspidatum>
- <http://nbii-nin.ciesin.columbia.edu/ipane/icat/browse.do?specid=86>

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