

# Japanese Knotweed

Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia Japonica*) was first introduced to Britain by the Victorians as an ornamental plant - and was actually awarded a gold medal at a prestigious flower show.

This plant is perennial and extremely invasive. It thrives on disturbance. The tiniest piece can re-grow and has been spread by both natural means and by human activity. It soon overruns riverbanks, railway embankments, road verges, gardens and hedgerows, threatening the survival of other native plant species and in turn insects and other animal species.

Japanese Knotweed is becoming a big issue in towns and cities and has become more noticeable in the last few years. Waltham Forest is no exception, and this invasive species has become prevalent across the borough and is now being noticed regularly by both residents and council officers.

## How do I recognise it?

In the **early spring** red/purple shoots appear from the ground and grow rapidly forming canes. As the canes grow the leaves gradually unfurl and turn green.

The plants are fully grown by **early summer** and mature canes are hollow with a distinctive purple speckle and form dense stands up to 3 metres high. The plant flowers in **late summer** and these consist of clusters of spiky stems covered in tiny creamy-white flowers. These provide a good source of nectar for insects. The seeds are rarely fertile and in Britain the plant spreads mainly by vegetative means.

The canes can arise from the rhizome which grows underground, from an existing crown, where previous growth has taken place, or from a cut stem. During the **late autumn/winter** the leaves fall and the canes die and turn brown.

Pictures of what this plant looks like are shown below but it can be recognised by the following:

- lush green in colour
- shovel shaped leaves
- stem is bamboo like in appearance
- produces white flowers around September or October
- can grow by 10cm a day

## Preventing spread

It is important that an effective Japanese Knotweed management programme is established including, where possible, **herbicide treatment** otherwise the plant will inevitably spread. All cut or pulled stems of Japanese Knotweed should be treated with extreme care as they can potentially re-sprout and cause spread. They should be kept on site or disposed of in a licensed landfill site that can carry out deep burial (by prior arrangement) to prevent spread onto other sites.

As stems, crowns and rhizomes readily regenerate, they must be allowed to dry out thoroughly after they have been pulled or cut, this can be helped by putting the material onto a plastic sheet, or raised wooden platform, rather than on the ground. Regular checks should be made to ensure that this material is not contaminating watercourses or other sites or developing roots. Thoroughly burning plant material on site after cutting and drying, where current by-laws allow, can be an effective means of disposal provided that the waste is burnt on site and not removed to other land.

Ensure that machinery, tools and work clothes are free of fragments of Knotweed before leaving the site.

Japanese Knotweed material is regarded as 'controlled waste' and not disposing of it properly would be an offence under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Allowing the spread of Japanese Knotweed into the wild is also an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

## **DO**

- Do make a plan to eradicate Japanese Knotweed from your site/garden.
- Do follow the Environment Agency's Code of Practice available on their website.
- Do use herbicides safely and effectively.
- Do obtain the approval of the Environment Agency prior to treatment if you intend to use herbicide in or near water on 08708 506 506.
- Do follow the manufacturer's instructions regarding protective clothing and the safe and effective use of herbicides.
- Do take care to avoid drift, and any damage to non-target plants when applying herbicides. Spraying should be performed during still dry conditions, without rain for 6 hours.

## **DO NOT**

- Don't flail Japanese Knotweed as this could cause it to spread. Cutting with sharp hooks, slashers, etc. or hand pulling is recommended to avoid any dispersal of cut fragments.
- Don't cause the spread of Japanese Knotweed stem and crowns. If you cut down Japanese Knotweed, it is best to dispose of it on site. Material taken off site must be safely contained and disposed of at a licensed disposal site.
- Don't try to dig up Japanese Knotweed as this will lead to a significant increase in stem density. Even a tiny fragment of the cut rhizome is capable of regeneration.
- Don't spread soil contaminated with Japanese Knotweed rhizome. Any soil that is obtained from ground within 7 m of a Japanese Knotweed plant could contain rhizome. The rhizome is highly regenerative and will readily grow into new plants.
- Don't chip Japanese Knotweed material. Mechanical chippers don't kill Japanese Knotweed. If you spread the chipped material on soil, Japanese Knotweed could regrow.
- Don't add Japanese Knotweed to compost. Compost it separately (preferably on plastic sheeting to prevent rooting) so that you can be sure it is dead before you apply it to land.
- Don't take Japanese Knotweed to recycling centres that receive garden waste as it will contaminate the compost.
- Don't dump garden waste contaminated with Japanese Knotweed in the countryside – in fact don't dump your waste anywhere other than lawful sites.
- Don't waste time. If Japanese Knotweed appears on your site/in your garden, treat it immediately. Don't allow it to become established.
- Don't break the law. Remember, if you cause Japanese Knotweed to spread you are guilty of an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981.

## Advice for Gardeners

If you suspect you have Japanese Knotweed on your property you should take care not to allow it to spread. Even the smallest piece of rhizome, stem or crown can potentially form a new plant.

Compost Japanese Knotweed separately, preferably on strong plastic sheeting so it is not in contact with the ground. Check the compost regularly to ensure it is not sprouting. Ensure that it is fully decomposed before spreading it on the garden.

Do not shred or strim the plant as this could cause rapid spread.

Mowing is only advised if you have a collecting box for mowings which can then be composted.

Do not dig Japanese Knotweed as this is known to increase stem density and it encourages sprouting and spread.

Hand pulling or cutting the plant is a good method of control but will take several years for the rhizome to be exhausted and die. Leave the material on a plastic sheet to dry and then burn it. Do this on site to prevent spread. The cutting and pulling of stems encourages the plant to send up more shoots which can in turn be pulled.

You can also use chemical herbicides, glyphosate is recommended, but treatment will need to be on-going and may take several years depending on how established the colony is.

Avoid digging within 7 meters of a colony of Japanese Knotweed and avoid moving the soil around the garden as the soil could contain rhizome.

**Do not take Japanese Knotweed material to your local recycling centre**, Japanese Knotweed has to be treated as 'controlled waste'.

**Do not remove Japanese Knotweed material from the site** unless you have made a prior arrangement with a licensed landfill site for deep burial. Treatment on site is the preferred option.

## Do the council offer a service to deal with Japanese Knotweed?

Waltham Forest Council **do** offer a service to deal with Japanese Knotweed through the Council's Service Store.

<https://walthamforestservicestore.co.uk/services/treat-japanese-knotweed/>

However, using the advice and guidance shown on these pages most individuals will be able to deal with it themselves through either the use of herbicides or cutting down/pulling up the plant and drying it out.

If you need to obtain specialist advice, we recommend that you search the internet or telephone directories as there are numerous companies that offer management or eradication services with regard to Japanese Knotweed.

## Where can I find further information?

More information can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/japanese-knotweed-giant-hogweed-and-other-invasive-plants>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/japanese-knotweed-managing-on-development-sites>



Leaves are heart shaped and lush green



Purple speckled bamboo like stands



Leaves are carried alternately on zig-zag stems.