

**JAPANESE  
KNOTWEED™  
TO BE  
IGNORED**



**HOMEOWNERS GUIDE TO JAPANESE KNOTWEED**

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**SPECIALIST CONTROL SERVICES | SURVEY | TREATMENT | REMOVAL**

## YOUR GUIDE

**What does Japanese knotweed look like? This guide gives you visual references of knotweed through the seasons, explains the impact of knotweed for homeowners, legal implications and details available methods of control.**

### WHAT IS JAPANESE KNOTWEED?

Japanese knotweed is an invasive and resilient herbaceous perennial. Its rhizomes (roots) can grow to a depth of 2m. Even after herbicide treatment has eradicated the aerial and surface growth, the deep underground rhizomes can remain in a viable state allowing it to re-emerge and re-grow on its own accord at any time and especially if the contaminated ground is disturbed. It's important to know what to look for, and what to do should you find knotweed.

Japanese knotweed changes in appearance throughout the year. Below you can see how the shoots appear in Spring, which then sprout into tall stems with large shovel shaped leaves, and creamy-white flowers in summer. In Autumn the leaves turn golden-orange, and in Winter the stems turn brown and brittle.

On the next page we look in more detail at the different parts of the plant.



**Scientific name:** *Reynoutria japonica*

**Maximum stem height:** 3 - 4 metres



## IDENTIFYING KNOTWEED

### RHIZOMES (ROOTS)

The rhizomes are the energy store of the plant, allowing it to hibernate over the Winter and re-emerge in the Spring. These are the most fertile parts of the plant: a piece the size of your little fingernail, 0.5g, can propagate into a new plant.

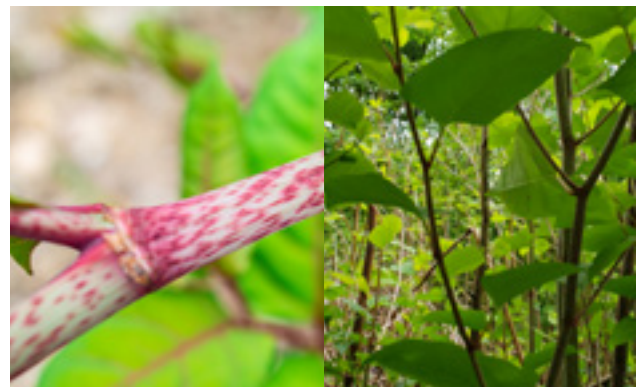
Japanese knotweed spreads via this rhizome material and not by seed. We only have the female version of the plant in the UK, which means there are no viable seeds. Every infestation of Japanese knotweed in the UK comes from the first cutting that arrived in the UK in 1850 and they're all genetically identical. As Japanese knotweed can only spread by means of vegetative matter, this means that human disturbance can create new growth.



### STEMS AND BRANCHES

Spring growth begins around the end of April to early May. The season start largely depends on the climate. During this time, it grows around 10cm per day, up to a maximum of 3 - 4m. It's a free-standing plant with tall stems, similar to bamboo. There is one branch from each node on the parent stem, each branch forms in a zig-zag fashion, with a leaf at each zig and each zag.

In Spring/Summer the canes are a pale lime green with red/purple flecks. As the season progresses, the stems turn brown and become brittle over winter, when the plant enters a dormant state.



### LEAVES

The leaves are shovel shaped and NOT heart shaped, as many websites report. The top of the leaf has a flat edge and it leads down to a point. They can grow up to around 20cm long (hand-sized). They turn golden/orange in November, just like the trees, and then fall off.



### FLOWERS

The flowers appear from August to mid-September. They're creamy-white and small, forming a cluster, called a panicle. Flowers grow in a linear formation, appearing as spears coming from the stem.

### HYBRIDS

Japanese knotweed can hybridise with similar species, such as Giant knotweed and dwarf knotweed to create bohemian knotweeds.



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## KNOTWEED DAMAGE

Japanese knotweed rarely causes structural damage to buildings or houses. However, large stands of knotweed, if left uncontrolled, can damage lightweight structures, freestanding walls, retaining walls, paths, hardstandings, drains and other ancillary features but, even in immediate proximity to significant structures, Japanese knotweed is not typically associated with major issues such as subsidence, heave or impact damage.

In their search for moisture, Japanese knotweed roots and rhizomes will exploit any weak areas (cracks or holes) of structures such as walls and pathways, and grow through them. This can interfere with infrastructure such as drainage pipes and other structures, blocking and sometimes lifting pipework and clogging sumps and drainage pits. Other underground infrastructures are at risk, such as cabling and water pipes.

Whilst the rhizomes can create problems underground, the aerial growth can grow to 10 or 12 feet high forming a very dense cover over a wide area, preventing native flora from growing and thus reducing the ability of indigenous, native plants from growing. For homeowners it can also impede amenity access and reduce the usable area of a garden or land.



## BUYING & SELLING

Since 2013, when selling a property the seller is required to state whether Japanese knotweed is present on their property by ticking a box on the TA6 form – a property information form used for conveyancing. Failure to do so, or to make a false statement is deemed an illegal act that has consequences such as the seller being sued for ‘misrepresentation’.

It’s not impossible to sell your house if it has Japanese knotweed growing on the property, though it can have a significant impact on the sale process. Many mortgage lenders and insurance companies are reluctant to provide loans or cover for properties that are affected by Japanese knotweed meaning it could be challenging to find a buyer. Even if you’re lucky enough to attract a cash buyer – the issues will remain – how to deal with the knotweed!

Having a professional survey carried out will a) determine whether you have knotweed or not, and b) if you do have knotweed will enable a Knotweed Management Plan (KMP) to be quoted for. Most lenders will consider lending if there is a KMP in place.

If you’re considering buying a property remember to ask if the seller has had a survey or if knotweed is present, have they got a KMP in place?

## KNOTWEED AND THE LAW

Japanese knotweed is listed within Section 14, Schedule 9, Part II of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 as a non-native invasive weed. This states 'if any person plants or otherwise causes to grow in the wild any plant which is included in Part II of Schedule 9, he shall be guilty of an offence'. Offenders may face a £5,000 fine and/or 6 months imprisonment, or 2 years and/or an unlimited fine on indictment.

If a homeowner has knotweed growing in the garden or land areas of their property they should make every effort to control the knotweed and prevent it from spreading onto a neighbouring property. Should the knotweed be allowed to encroach a claim of private nuisance could be made.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 sets out the appropriate methods for collection, disposal or treatment of controlled waste which includes Japanese knotweed contaminated materials.

This means that a homeowner cannot dispose of any knotweed material or soils themselves. It must be carted away by a company licensed to carry such waste, and to a landfill site licensed to receive it. It cannot be composted or discarded onto waste ground or into the countryside.



## DO'S & DON'TS

### IF YOU SUSPECT YOU'VE FOUND KNOTWEED ON A PROPERTY, DON'T...

- ✗ Allow any of the area to be disturbed until a professional Japanese knotweed company has surveyed the area.
- ✗ Allow knotweed material to leave the property intentionally or unintentionally in a manner that will contravene the Environmental Protection Act and the Environmental Protection (Duty of Care) Regulations.
- ✗ Allow Japanese knotweed to spread into adjacent properties, as this will contravene The Wildlife and Countryside Act and leave the property owner vulnerable to third party litigation.
- ✗ Flail or strim knotweed, as this will cause the Japanese knotweed to spread.
- ✗ Cover or store materials on top of Japanese knotweed areas, or the materials themselves could become contaminated with knotweed and must be disposed of accordingly.
- ✗ Chip or mow Japanese knotweed material, as this could result in new Japanese knotweed growth wherever the chipped material is spread.
- ✗ Add Japanese knotweed to compost, as this can lead to knotweed growing in the compost heap.
- ✗ Burn Japanese knotweed as a sole means of treatment as large rhizome and crowns can survive burning.

### ENSURE THAT YOU DO....

- ✓ Isolate the Japanese knotweed
- ✓ Instruct a specialist company to survey the area and provide a structured Knotweed Management Plan
- ✓ Commence treatment/removal of Japanese knotweed as soon as possible after discovering its presence.
- ✓ Adhere to recommendations in the PCA Code of Practice.

### COMMON MYTHS

Japanese knotweed cannot be 'killed'. The following are also ineffective and will most likely result in more damage being done to your property:

- BURNING
- PETROL
- BLEACH
- BOILING WATER



## CONTROL METHODS

When controlling invasive weeds, it is important to get expert advice from a professional company such as Japanese Knotweed Ltd. Here we explain our methods of control.

### HERBICIDE TREATMENT

Often a Herbicide Treatment Programme is the most cost-effective method of control. It involves planned and carefully managed visits to carry out herbicide spraying with correct use of chemical over a sustained period of time (typically 2-5 years). This method does not remove the plant's underground rhizome system, meaning if left unmanaged it could regrow, especially if disturbed.

Herbicides work by exhausting the plant's energy stores. Over time, the treatment programme will prevent the plant producing aerial growth and additionally, prevent the rhizomes from growing further.

Treatment methods include stem injection, herbicide spray and leaf wiping.

### EXCAVATION

If the knotweed area is likely to be disturbed, physical removal of all of the knotweed plant parts may be required instead. This includes removing all fragments of underground rhizome and surrounding soils which may contain particles of knotweed.

Sometimes a Root Barrier method can be used. This option uses a membrane material that knotweed cannot grow through, thus stifling any growth. It's used to prevent the spread or to lock in ground containing knotweed plant material, in an area that is not planned to be disturbed, worked on or built on.

### REMOVAL

Removal of knotweed and exposed soil from excavation is a carefully managed procedure, to ensure nothing is left behind. Our carrier vehicles will take all bags away leaving your property clean, though it's worth noting that excavation will require a period of time for the land to rejuvenate.



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