

# Japanese knotweed

## (*Fallopia japonica*)

### Homeowners Fact Sheet

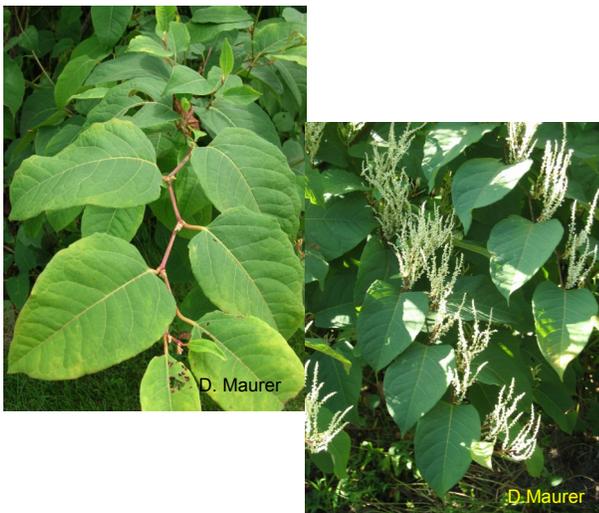
Tips for identifying, controlling, and monitoring Japanese knotweed on your property

#### Background

Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*/*Polygonum cuspidatum*) is a fast-growing invasive plant that is native to Asia. It was first introduced to the United States in the late 1800's for ornamental use and was documented in northeast Illinois by 1961. Unfortunately knotweed has infested stream and creek banks, floodplain forests, road sides, and other areas with moist soil.

#### Why Should You Care?

Japanese knotweed leafs out early in the spring before native plants and is able to outshade and displace those plants so that many native animals that depend on native plants lose shelter and food throughout the infested area. Knotweed's shallow root system does not protect against erosion resulting in scoured and unstable stream banks and decreased water clarity. Finally, tall stands of knotweed limit recreational access and obstruct scenic views which affects property values.



#### Identification

- Grows along stream banks, springs, and roadsides (moist soils)
- Sprouts in early spring; looks like asparagus with its thick, reddish stems
- Grows 3 – 12 feet tall
- Develops robust, hollow, reddish, bamboo-like stem with swollen areas where branching occurs
- Leaves are simple, up to 6 inches long and offset from each other along the stem; they are oval to triangular with pointy tips and a completely straight or flat base (where leaf attaches to stem)
- Flowers are white to pink spikelets that bloom in late summer
- Stalks die in fall and turn a rusty color. Underground rhizomes remain viable throughout winter

## Some Suggested Control Methods

Cutting or mowing is recommended at ground level at least four times a year between April and September. Make the last cut when the plant has stopped growing. Check up to 20 feet away for re-sprouts. (Japanese knotweed pieces can be burned or buried at least 10 feet down, but not composted while they are “green.”)

If you choose to use a chemical control method use the herbicide glyphosate. A 2% solution is recommended. Many different formulations are available so please check product labels. Use a product labeled for aquatic use if the plant is growing in wetlands. Do not apply herbicide near or on water. Follow instructions on herbicide label, add dye to the solution, and spray the solution on plants on a day when there is little chance of rain washing the herbicide from the leaves and wind blowing the herbicide away from its target. Coat leaf surface lightly—not to the point of the leaf dripping with herbicide. Herbicide may take several weeks to produce visible effects (browning of leaves). Dispose of used gloves in trash and wash contaminated clothing separately.

Combination of cutting and herbicide application is the most effective method. Again choose a time with no chance of rain for at least an hour. Cut the stem of the plant to 2-3 inches above soil. Apply glyphosate (with dye mixed in) to plant stump immediately after cutting. Wait at least 7 days before re-cutting, mowing, or disturbing treated stems. When plant has regrown in the fall opt for spraying the leaves (see above).

## Follow-up

As knotweed is removed from your site fill that space with native or non-invasive plants by seeding or planting. When these plants become established they will help keep out Japanese knotweed and other invasive plants. Be sure to continue monitoring for knotweed sprouts! Native alternatives include: winterberry holly (*Ilex verticillata*), spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), silky willow (*Salix sericea*), Goat’s beard (*Aruncus dioicus*), giant fleecflower (*Persicaria polymorpha*), and pussy willow (*Salix discolor*).



## Precautions

- While performing your control work please be aware of the following:
- Make certain not to scatter stems or root fragments
- Clean cutting equipment after each use.
- Rake and pile up stems where they will dry out. Do not compost while “green.”
- Do not allow cut, mowed, or pulled vegetation to enter waterways.
- Carefully dry or dispose of roots. Do not put them in a compost pile.
- Be sure to cover or search at least 20 feet (7 m) away from the original patch center as roots will spread through a larger area than the above ground stems.
- If using herbicide, be sure to follow all label directions
- Monitor treated area!

## Equipment & Supplies You May Need

Loppers or machete

Weed wacker and/or mower

Herbicide (glyphosate)

Rubber gloves and appropriate eye protection

Long pants, long sleeved shirt, closed-toe shoes

Spray bottle

Liquid dye (food coloring or Rit dye works)

Patience, persistence, and commitment (this will take several years)

## Additional Resources

King County Best Management Practices for Invasive Knotweeds <http://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/water-and-land/weeds/BMPs/Knotweed-Control.pdf>

Homeowners Guide to Japanese Knotweed Control [http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/invasives/documents/japanese\\_knotweed\\_control.pdf](http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/invasives/documents/japanese_knotweed_control.pdf)

NIIPP Natural History and Identification [http://niipp.net/?page\\_id=530&id=POCU6](http://niipp.net/?page_id=530&id=POCU6)

Midwest Invasive Plant Network Control Database <http://mipncontroldatabase.wisc.edu/>



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