

Japanese knotweed

Fallopia japonica

Best Practice Management Guidelines

1. Aim of this advice

This document provides best practice management guidance on the control of Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) on the island of Ireland.

2. Introduction

Japanese knotweed is a non-native invasive perennial (plant that lives more than one year) species in Ireland. Since it was introduced as an ornamental plant in the 19th Century from Japan it has spread across the UK and Ireland, particularly along watercourses, transport routes and infested waste areas.

It is rhizomatous (produces underground stems) with distinctive branched hollow, bamboo-like canes that can grow to over 3m in height. Red/purple shoots appear early in spring but as the canes grow, the leaves unfurl and the plant turns green. The mature canes are hollow and have a characteristic pattern of purple speckles. Flowering occurs in late summer/autumn and consists of creamy white flowers.

The underground rhizomes are thick and woody with a knotty appearance and when broken reveal a bright orange-coloured centre. During the winter the leaves die back and reveal orange/brown woody erect stems. Only female Japanese knotweed plants have been recorded to date in Ireland and although seeds are produced, they are hybrids and rarely survive.

The principal means of spread is through the deliberate or accidental movement of rhizome fragments or cut stems.

3. Impacts

Japanese knotweed has vigorously invaded natural habitats and out competes native plants. Japanese knotweed forms tall thickets that exclude all other vegetation, shading the area below. Native plants can rarely compete with this invasive species and local plant biodiversity is reduced. Rivers, hedgerows, roadsides and railways form important wildlife corridors for native plants and animals to migrate and disperse along, and large infestations of Japanese knotweed can block these routes for wildlife.

Japanese knotweed can also seriously damage buildings, hard surfaces and infrastructure. Once established underneath or around the built environment, it can be particularly hard to control, growing through concrete and tarmac and other hardstandings. When Japanese knotweed colonises riverbanks, it can damage flood defence structures and reduce the capacity of channels to carry flood water.

The Global Invasive Species Programme categorises Japanese knotweed as one of the worlds 100 worst invasive alien species. In light of the economic and environmental damage associated with this species, the risk assessment process undertaken as part of the Invasive Species in Ireland project identified Japanese knotweed as one of the highest risk (most unwanted) non-native invasive species in Ireland

4. Legal status - Northern Ireland

Japanese knotweed is listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 and it is therefore an offence to plant or cause it to grow in the wild. The current Environment and Heritage Service policy on disposal of Japanese knotweed material and contaminated soils follows the Environment Agency guidelines and thereby places a duty of care on all waste producers to ensure Japanese knotweed is disposed of at a licensed landfill site and the site operator is notified. There is also a duty of care to prevent spread to adjacent land or by failing to dispose of Japanese knotweed by following the correct guidelines. Remember that not all licensed landfill sites will receive Japanese knotweed waste. Contact your local authority for information on where these sites are located.

5. Legal status - Republic of Ireland

At present, there are no specific legislative provisions that directly govern Japanese knotweed control or removal in the Republic of Ireland. However, the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 states that anyone who plants or otherwise causes to grow in a wild state in any place in the State any species of (exotic) flora, or the flowers, roots, seeds or spores of (exotic) flora shall be guilty of an offence.

7. Control and eradication

Currently there are three means by which Japanese knotweed can be eradicated from sites. These are:

- Long-term treatment with herbicides.
- Excavation and disposal at a licensed landfill site.
- Excavation, deep burial and/or bunding on site prior to treatment with herbicide.

Due to site specific variations in soil type, topography, adjacent sensitivities and degree of Japanese knotweed infestation, combinations of various control methods should be used. It is important that Japanese knotweed is controlled as soon as possible. These methods are generally expensive with costs increasing as the infestation size and duration increases

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Best Practice Management Guidelines - *Japanese Knotweed* is available at:

<http://www.invasivespeciesireland.com/files/public/BPM%20Guidance/Japanese%20knotweed%20BPM.pdf>

The **Invasive Species in Ireland Project** is undertaken, in partnership, by **EnviroCentre** and **Quercus**.

www.envirocentre.co.uk

www.quercus.ac.uk

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Environment

and Heritage Service.

www.ehsni.gov.uk

www.npws.ie

For more information on the Invasive Species in Ireland Project please see the website at www.invasivespeciesireland.com