Guidance on control for homeowners

Identifying Japanese knotweed

Japanese knotweed begins to grow in early spring and can grow in any type of soil, no matter how poor. It can grow as much as 20 centimetres per day, and can reach a height of 1.5 metres by May and 3 metres by June. It does not produce viable seeds in the UK, but instead spreads through rhizome (underground root-like stem) fragments and cut stems. Japanese knotweed:

- produces fleshy red tinged shoots when it first breaks through the ground
- has large, heart or spade-shaped green leaves
- has leaves arranged in a zig-zag pattern along the stem
- has a hollow stem, like bamboo
- can form dense clumps that can be several metres deep
- produces clusters of cream flowers towards the end of July
- dies back between September and November, leaving brown s???

More information can be viewed here:
www.nonnativespecies.org/index.cfm?sectionid=47

If you have knotweed in your garden

Control can be carried out by the homeowner and doesn't require a specialist company. However, a specialist company will be skilled at control and can dispose of the plant waste. Professional contractors will have access to more powerful weed killers that may reduce the treatment period significantly.

Identification is important - Japanese knotweed can be confused with other plants.

Non-chemical controls

Cutting and burning invasive plants

Cutting down or digging up invasive plants can be a useful low-tech means of control.

Cutting invasive plants

Cutting Japanese knotweed will, over time, weaken the plant, but it will not kill the rhizomes (underground root-like stems). It can be used as part of other control practices. You must handle and dispose of cut plant material carefully. Burning may not be sufficient to kill the plant material. You should place burnt material on top of a membrane and monitor it for regrowth. You must not use a strimmer on Japanese knotweed.

Burning invasive plants

Burning waste materials is a type of waste disposal. If you burn waste in the open you may require an environmental permit or registered waste exemption.

You must also ensure that your activity does not:

- endanger human health or cause pollution to water, air or soil
- constitute a risk to plants or animals
- cause a nuisance, eg in terms of noise or odour
- adversely affect the countryside or places of special interest

You can leave cut stems to dry out in the sun rather than burning them. Make sure you place cut Japanese knotweed material on a membrane and not in direct contact with the ground.

Digging Out

Digging out is possible, but due to the depth that the rhizomes can penetrate, regrowth usually occurs. This method also creates problems over disposal as **Japanese knotweed is classed as a 'controlled waste'** under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. This requires disposal at licensed landfill sites. Specialist Japanese knotweed contractors are usually licensed to safely remove the weed from site but check first before employing their services. Alternatively, it can be destroyed on site by allowing it to dry out before burning. **On no account should Japanese knotweed be included with normal household waste or put out in green waste collection schemes.**

- If digging out is attempted, remove as much root as possible, then repeatedly destroy regrowth. In this way the energy reserves in the remaining underground parts will be gradually exhausted; a process which may, however, take several seasons.

Chemical controls

Herbicide treatment can be a very effective way of controlling Japanese knotweed, but a lack of regrowth does not mean the underground rhizome is dead. If the soil is disturbed, knotweed often regrows

Glyphosate

- Perhaps the most effective and simplest method for the home gardener to tackle Japanese knotweed is with the glyphosate-based weed killer. This is often sold as Roundup or ask your supplier for a suitable weed killer. Always carefully check the label and follow instructions when using any herbicide.
- Glyphosate is usually applied to the foliage and is passed within the plant to the underground parts.

It is useful to cut away old stems during the previous winter to allow good access. You must never strim areas containing Japanese knotweed.

- The best time for spraying with glyphosate is at the flowering stage in late summer. However, it is difficult to spray at this stage, when the weed is 2.1m (7ft) or more high.
- A more practical approach is to allow Japanese knotweed to grow to about 90cm (3ft), which will usually be reached in May, and spray then. There will be regrowth and consequently a second application in mid-summer is useful. Check during September and if it has grown once more, spray again before growth begins to die down in the autumn. Check again the following spring.
- Avoid spray coming into contact with garden plants. Glyphosate-treated knotweed will often produce small-leaved, bushy regrowth 50-90cm (20in-3ft)

in height the following spring. This is very different in appearance to the normal plant and it is essential that this regrowth is treated.

- It usually takes at least three to four seasons to eradicate Japanese knotweed using glyphosate. Professional contractors, however, will have access to more powerful weedkillers that may reduce this period by half

Further guidance on Japanese Knoweed and other invasive species can be found at:

www.gov.uk/japanese-knotweed-giant-hogweed-and-other-invasive-plants

www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=218