



Whatcom Weeds

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board 901 W. Smith Road Bellingham WA 98226
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KNOTWEEDS

Japanese Knotweed *Polygonum cuspidatum*; **Giant Knotweed** *Polygonum sachalinense*;
Himalayan Knotweed *Polygonum polystachyum*

Japanese, giant and Himalayan knotweed are all introduced members of the buckwheat family. These plants are aggressive invaders that spread by rhizomes, as well as by wind-dispersed seed. Japanese and giant knotweeds are very similar to each other and produce hybrids. These two plants are distinguished from each other primarily by the size of the leaf and height of the plant. Himalayan knotweed has a much more narrow leaf. As with all members of this family, all three species have jointed stems, swollen at the nodes, with a papery sheath above each stem node and at the base of the leaf stalks.

JAPANESE KNOTWEED

THREAT: Japanese knotweed is the most common of these three knotweeds, in Whatcom County. It is native to eastern Asia and was introduced into England as a garden ornamental in 1825. From there, it was introduced into North America, in the late 1800s. Japanese knotweed invades riparian areas, moist disturbed sites, rights of way and roadsides. It grows well in a variety of soil types and tolerates a wide range of soil pH, but does best in sunny, moist areas. Long, thick, stout rhizomes, which form dense mats in the soil, send up new shoots, to quickly spread an infestation. Pieces of root, rhizome and stems, moved by water, machinery or people, are the primary sources of new infestations. New plants can sprout from root or stem fragments as small as 1 inch. It is believed few plants start from seed in North America.



DESCRIPTION: Japanese knotweed is a herbaceous perennial, which grows up to 8 feet tall in shrubby clumps. The reddish stems are hollow, smooth and jointed, similar to bamboo stems, with which it is sometimes confused. Japanese knotweed develops a deep, matted root system, with rhizomes that can grow to 30 feet or more in length. The leaves are usually ovate, and between 4 and 6 inches long. The small, whitish to greenish flowers grow in drooping clusters from the leaf axils. Male and female flowers are borne on separate plants and flowering occurs in late summer. The plant dies back in the winter and the tall, dead, brown stems remain standing.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: Japanese knotweed is very difficult to eradicate once it has become established. It is, therefore, important to prevent new infestations and eradicate small patches before they spread. Knotweed should *never* be dug up and transplanted for use in the home landscape. Mechanical and chemical control methods are used on Japanese knotweed, usually in conjunction with each other. Cutting should be done with caution as stem fragments may grow new roots as well. Digging is usually not recommended, as it is extremely difficult to remove all the rhizomes, and fragments of roots and rhizomes may spread the infestation. If control is to be effective, the sites must be visited throughout several seasons to further control any new growth. Contact the weed control board for site-specific chemical recommendations.

GIANT KNOTWEED

THREAT: Giant knotweed is native to northern Japan and the Sakhalin Islands. Like Japanese knotweed, giant knotweed is invasive and spreads by rhizomes.

DESCRIPTION: Giant knotweed is quite similar to Japanese knotweed. It also is a perennial, forming large, shrub-like mounds. Giant knotweed grows up to 12 feet in height. The leaves are more heart shaped than those of Japanese knotweed, and grow up to 12 inches long. Japanese and giant knotweed form hybrids that have leaves intermediate between the parent species.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: Same as for Japanese knotweed.

HIMALAYAN KNOTWEED

THREAT: Himalayan knotweed is an introduced plant, native to south and central Asia, including the Himalayas. This plant has been introduced to Europe, as well as the United States, and has become naturalized in areas of central Europe. It spreads vigorously, both by seed and through creeping underground rhizomes.

DESCRIPTION: Himalayan knotweed is a perennial, growing up to 6 feet high, with red stems and leaf stalks. It has creeping underground rhizomes, which aid in its ability to spread. The oblong, lance-shaped leaves are 4 to 8 inches long, with brown, persistent sheaths at the bases of the leaf stalks. The flowers are white to pink, and occur in loose, branched clusters.

Himalayan knotweed will grow on most soil types, but does require moisture. It grows in both sunlight and partial shade.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: Management options are not well known for Himalayan knotweed but are likely to be the same as for Japanese knotweed.



Knotweed Leaves: Giant Knotweed (l.), Japanese Knotweed (cen.), Himalayan Knotweed (r.)