

# WEED of the MONTH

## Japanese Knotweed, *Polygonum cuspidatum*

ODNR Division of Forestry

740-589-9910 or 614-265-6366

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**Japanese Knotweed** is an upright, shrub-like, herbaceous perennial that can grow to over 10 feet in height. Stems of Japanese knotweed are smooth, stout and swollen at joints where the leaf meets the stem. As with all members of this family, the base of the stem above each joint is surrounded by a membranous sheath. Although leaf size may vary, they are normally about 6 inches long by 3 to 4 inches wide, broadly oval to somewhat triangular and pointed at the tip. The minute greenish-white flowers occur in attractive, branched sprays in summer and are followed soon after by small winged fruits. Seeds are triangular, shiny, and very small, about 1/10 inch long.

### WHY SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?

Japanese knotweed, like all non-native invasive species, spreads quickly to form dense thickets that exclude native vegetation. This plant can alter soil chemistry, out-compete native plants and displace animals that depend on native plants. It poses a significant threat to riparian areas, where it can survive severe floods and is able to rapidly colonize scoured shores and islands. Once established, populations are extremely persistent. It shades out everything underneath it, preventing forest regeneration, eliminating populations of understory plants and essentially stopping natural succession.

### DISTRIBUTION IN THE UNITED STATES

[Current distribution](#) of Japanese knotweed includes 36 states in the lower 48 from Maine to Wisconsin south to Louisiana, and scattered midwest and western states. It is not currently known to occur in Hawaii.

### HABITAT IN THE UNITED STATES

Japanese knotweed can tolerate a variety of adverse conditions including full shade, high temperatures, high salinity, and drought. It is found near water sources, such as along streams and rivers, in low-lying areas, waste places, utility rights-of-way, and around old homesites.

### BACKGROUND

Japanese knotweed was probably introduced to the U.S. in the late 1800's. Also known as crimson beauty, Mexican bamboo, Japanese fleece flower, or Reynoutria, it was first introduced as an ornamental and has also been used for erosion control and for landscape screening. It is now found throughout the eastern U.S., in several western states, and Alaska, which has few exotic invasive plants to date.



### BIOLOGY & SPREAD

Japanese knotweed spreads primarily by vegetative means with the help of its long, stout rhizomes. It is often

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transported to new sites as a contaminant in fill dirt seeds, sometimes distributed by water, and carried to a lesser extent by the wind. Escapees from neglected gardens, and discarded cuttings are common routes of dispersal from urban areas.

### MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Grubbing is NOT effective except for small initial populations or environmentally sensitive areas where herbicides cannot be used. Juvenile plants may be hand pulled depending on soil conditions and root development. Any portions of the root system not removed will re-sprout. All plant parts (including mature fruit) should be bagged and disposed of in a trash dumpster to prevent reestablishment.



This plant is difficult to control manually, mechanically and chemically. Foliar applications of chemicals can be effective, but also damaging to non-target species. If using this method, do not apply so heavily that herbicide will drip off leaves. The cut stem approach requires less chemical, but more work. Cut stems must be sprayed quickly after stems are cut for the uptake of the chemical into the plant tissue.

**USE PESTICIDES WISELY: ALWAYS READ THE ENTIRE PESTICIDE LABEL CAREFULLY, FOLLOW ALL MIXING AND APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS AND WEAR ALL RECOMMENDED PERSONAL PROTECTIVE GEAR AND CLOTHING. CONTACT YOUR STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOR ANY ADDITIONAL PESTICIDE USE REQUIREMENTS, RESTRICTIONS OR RECOMMENDATIONS.**

**For information on how to identify and control Japanese knotweed or how to better manage your trees, contact the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry at 740-589-9910 or 614-265-6366.**