Invasive Knotweeds

Polygonum bohemicum, P. cuspidatum, P. polystachym, P. sachalinense

Buckwheat Family

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
KITSAP COUNTY EXTENSION

Noxious Weed of Concern
Control Recommended

Identification Tips

All invasive knotweeds such as giant, Japanese, Himalayan and Bohemian are similar in general appearance:

- Grows into large, dense thickets
- 4 to 12 feet tall
- Bamboo-like reddish-brown canes
- Hollow stems with thin, papery sheathes
- Flowers are small, white/green and grow in showy plume-like branched clusters

Leaves predominately heart-shaped on all but Himalayan which has an elongated, tapered shape; giant knotweed leaves often exceed 12 inches across, twice the size of Japanese knotweed leaves

Japanese knotweed is one of several species of invasive knotweeds.

Biology

- Non-native, herbaceous perennial
- Invades moist soils, but can also grow in dry areas
- Spreads by seeds and vegetatively from rhizomes and roots
- Rhizomes can be 30 feet long or more
- Flowers in late July
- Plants die back and end of growing season but dead canes persist over the winter

The key difference between species is size and shape of the leaves. From left to right: giant, Japanese, and Himalayan knotweed leaves.

Impacts

- Thickets can completely clog small waterways
- Displaces native plants due to its aggressive growth
- Creates bank erosion problems and is considered a potential flood hazard
- Lowers the quality of riparian habitat for fish/wildlife

Distribution

- Found throughout Kitsap County, especially along roadsides and stream banks
- Can grow in partial shade or sunny sites

Invasive knotweeds quickly invade valuable riparian areas.

Questions?

Kitsap County Noxious Weed Control Program Line: **360-307-4242**
http://kitsap.wsu.edu/noxious_weed

What you can do

Prevention of new infestations is the key to controlling invasive, non-native knotweeds. Preventative techniques include eradication of small, newly established sites, monitoring stream corridors for new infestations and long-term follow up of controlled sites.

Control Methods

Most control methods need to be applied over several years to be successful. Choose one or a combination of the methods listed below. Combining manual control with herbicide control typically proves most effective.

Prevention: Non-native knotweeds were introduced from Asia as ornamentals, but over the years have escaped into the natural landscape. Since knotweeds are now so widespread in Kitsap County, control is not legally required As a result, they are sometime offered for sale. Please choose your garden ornamentals wisely and be very careful if your property is near wetlands and stream banks.

Manual: Small infestations should be dug up and removed from the site. Plants can re-sprout from creeping rhizomes so care should be taken to completely remove the entire root system. For larger strands, try cutting once or twice a month during the growing season, which will keep the plants from flowering and weaken the roots and rhizomes. Do not compost cuttings. Frequently inspect for new growth.

Another option is tarping. Cut down the knotweed and stake black plastic or geotextile fabric over the area. This method essentially smothers the knotweeds. It is time consuming to set up, but results in rich soil and fewer weeds. For more information on tarping, please contact the Kitsap County Noxious Weed Control Program.

Chemical: Follow label application directions, especially when applying near sensitive and their buffers. For fall or spring control, use a product with glyphosate, such as Roundup, when conditions are dry. Glyphosate is absorbed only green leaves and should not be used when raining. It is not effective on woody stems or leaves that have died back. Apply the herbicide evenly to the leaves and do not allow it to fall onto desirable plants, as this is a non-selective herbicide. If spraying in the summer, consider products with the active ingredient triclopyr. Brand names include Crossbow and Brush B Gone. This herbicide does not injure most grasses so it is a good choice in lawn areas. However; do not let it drift onto nearby plants and tree trunks since triclopyr is absorbed by woody tissue. It is best to spray actively growing plants.

Stem injections are a new weapon in the war on invasive knotweeds. While this process is labor-intensive, it has yielded promising results. Knotweed stems are injected with herbicides using a specially made injector gun, this nearly eliminating the risk of drift, making this method preferred in aquatic areas where knotweeds tend to invade.

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Modified from the King County Noxious Weed Program