

Knotweeds *(Fallopia and Polygonum)*

THIS IS AN ALERT SPECIES:
 Report all sightings of this plant
 to your regional Invasive
 Species Coordinator at
 250.404-0115 or
oasiss@shaw.ca

INTRODUCTION

Invasive knotweeds are one of the most impressive of the province's top 13 "unwanted" horticulture plants in the southern region. The primary knotweed species found in BC is Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), although Bohemian knotweed (*Fallopia x bohemica*), Giant knotweed (*Fallopia sachalinensis*) and Himalayan knotweed (*Polygonum polystachyum*) also occur in our province. Since all four species are similar in appearance, biology, impacts, distribution and methods of control, they will be discussed under the general title of "knotweeds".

Invasive knotweeds are native to eastern Asia and have spread at a rapid rate because of their lush ornamental appeal to gardeners, persistent root system and ability to adapt to a wide range of habitats. Several occurrences of knotweeds have been observed in Keremeos, Penticton, Oliver and Summerland.

They have been marketed as bamboo due to their hollow stems, but are not even related. Knotweeds are very hardy and spread aggressively. They are capable of blocking access to waterways, reducing sightlines along roads and fences, shading out native plants, dominating riparian areas, increasing soil erosion and have the potential to undermine building foundations.

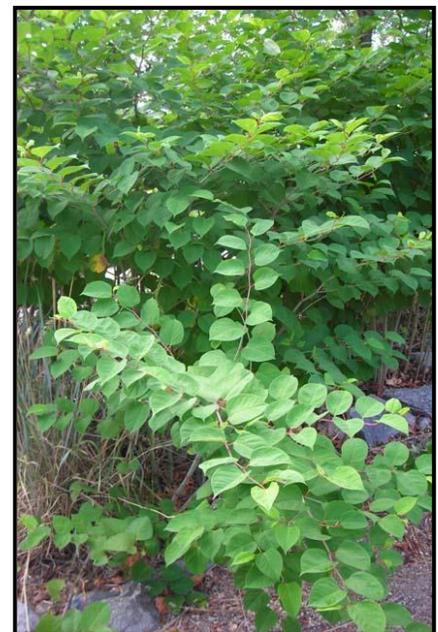
IDENTIFICATION

- Herbaceous perennial
- Deep and long roots
- Hollow, green with red speckled stems and nodes (1-5 m in height)
- Japanese knotweed leaves are heart or triangle-shaped; Himalayan knotweed has long-tapered leaves
- Flowers are small white-greenish or light pinkish in showy plume-like branched clusters

BIOLOGY

Invasive knotweeds are herbaceous perennials that prefer moist habitats and freshly disturbed soils, and are capable of thriving in sun or shade. All knotweeds are very efficient at spreading in part because they use their root system and can propagate vegetatively. A broken piece of a rhizome, as small as 2 cm, can form a new plant colony with shoots that sprout all along its rhizomes and a plant will reach its full height by the end of June. The roots are capable of growing 3 meters vertically and 20 meters horizontally. In their native range, knotweeds reproduce by normal bisexual flowers, but they can also have plants that are solely female and that do not propagate by seed. Seed dispersal is minimal as there are more female than male plants and each species of knotweed is predominantly one sex.

Knotweed can reduce or eliminate access to water bodies for recreational activities including fishing, swimming, boating, canoeing, and kayaking.



INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT

The best overall method of control for knotweeds is an integrated program using a combination of control methods as these invaders are extremely persistent and have such an extensive root system and carbohydrate reserve.

PREVENTION

The most effective way to ensure that your lands do not become infested with knotweed is by prevention. Here are some recommendations to prevent knotweeds from invading your property:

- Learn to identify knotweeds and other invasive plants.
- Do not purchase, trade or grow knotweed.
- Immediately re-vegetate disturbed, bare soils with a suitable seed mixture that provides dense, early colonization to prevent establishment of invasive plants.
- Remove knotweed pieces from vehicle and machinery tires before leaving a knotweed infested area.
- Ensure soil, gravel and other fill material are not contaminated.



Leaves of Japanese knotweed zigzag along the arching stems

PHYSICAL CONTROL

Mowing and cutting may be effective if done close to the ground, twice per month between April and August, then monthly until the first frost. Repeat this treatment for at least 5 years to exhaust root reserves. Mechanically controlled areas should be monitored throughout the growing season to ensure new infestations do not develop from root fragments. All cut plant parts should be incinerated or undergo deep burial at a landfill. Care should be taken to ensure that plant parts are not distributed during transport.

For further information on invasive plants in the Okanagan-Similkameen, go to: www.oasiss.ca
To learn about invasive plants elsewhere in BC, go to: www.weedsbc.ca or www.bcinvases.ca

For more information about the Okanagan-Similkameen Invasive Plant Program please contact the Regional District at 250-492-0237 or toll free at 1-877-610-3737.

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL

There are no biological controls for knotweeds available at this time. However, the BC Ministry of Forests and Range has joined forces with the Knotweed Biocontrol Consortium to work with scientists from around the world in hopes of discovering a suitable biocontrol agent or natural insect enemy.



Information compiled by: Lisa Scott and Jessica Hobden
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Photo credit: Lisa Scott

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