



Whatcom Weeds

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board 322 N. Commercial St. Bellingham WA 98225
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KNOTWEEDS

Japanese Knotweed ***Polygonum cuspidatum***; Giant Knotweed ***Polygonum sachalinense***; Himalayan Knotweed ***Polygonum polystachyum*** Bohemian Knotweed ***Polygonum x bohemicum***

Japanese, giant, Bohemian, 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 a hybrid known as Bohemian knotweed (*Polygonum x bohemicum*). These plants are distinguished from each other primarily by the size and shape of the leaf. Himalayan knotweed has a much more narrow leaf. Giant knotweed leaves are much larger than Japanese or Bohemian. As with all members of this family, the knotweeds have jointed stems, swollen at the nodes, with a papery sheath above each stem node and at the base of the leaf stalks.

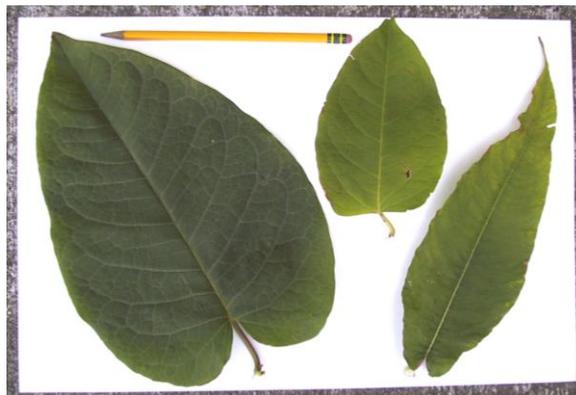


THREAT: The knotweeds are native to eastern Asia and were introduced into England as a garden ornamental in 1825. From there, they were introduced into North America, in the late 1800s. Knotweed invades riparian areas, moist disturbed sites, rights of way and roadsides. Knotweed impacts to natural areas include a negative effect on the food web for salmon and reducing native plant populations. 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 (floods), machinery or people, are the primary sources of new infestations. New plants can sprout from root or stem fragments as small as 1 inch. The knotweeds also reproduce by seed.



DESCRIPTION: 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. Knotweed develops a deep, matted root system, with rhizomes that can grow to 30 feet or more in length. The leaf shapes are one way to distinguish between species, and are illustrated on this page. The small, whitish to greenish flowers grow in clusters from the leaf axils. The plant dies back in the winter and the tall, dead brown stems remain standing.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: 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 Bohemian 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. Please refer to our publication "Control Options for Knotweed" for additional chemical and mechanical recommendations.



Giant (left), Bohemian (cntr), and Himalayan (rt) leaves