
SUNNYSIDE THYMES

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“Helping Others Grow”

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Space Invaders - Japanese Knotweed

By Jan Sherrell, SMG Member

Japanese Knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*, known to some botanists as *Fallopia japonica*) is a non-native invasive plant introduced as an ornamental from East Asia in the late 1800s. Its invasive powers are fueled by its mighty roots or rhizomes, consider an analogy of a glacier with more mass under the root line than above. The tiniest fragment of stem or rhizome will easily take root and regrow into another voracious plant so it's a real demon to eradicate.

Leaf identification is similar to a lilac and the hollow stem is reminiscent of bamboo. Knotweed has alternate leaves that look nothing like bamboo leaves.

Stems emerge in late March, early April, and are fast growing. It is a perennial herbaceous shrub growing from three to ten feet in height. Its leaves are simple, alternate and broad, growing up to six inches long and five inches wide. Its hollow stalks persist through winter and resemble bamboo.

Knotweed has large creamy white flowers, arranged in spikes near the ends of the arching stems, blooming in July thru September. The fruits are small, brown and triangular and mature from September to January. The dense patches of knotweed shade and displace other plant life and reduce wildlife habitat. This hardy beast can tolerate shade, but prefers full sun, growing alongside roadsides and streams.

Controlling the Knotweed is a multi-step process, and the timing is important to success. With growth up to ten feet, one might best outsmart it than to try to out man it. Though tempting to chop it

back earlier, experts suggest allowing growth until June 1, then aggressively mowing it or trimming it to the ground. A follow-up herbicide application should be delayed for at least six

weeks. This allows the knotweed to resprout and develop its new (though smaller) canopy and begin sending carbohydrates back to the rhizomes. Spray this vigorous two to four-foot regrowth with glyphosate. As with any invasive, persistence is key to eradicating.

For additional information a search of “japanese knotweed edu” – brings up academic articles or here is the link to a DNR article:

https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/invasives/documents/japanese_knotweed_control.pdf



Photo: U. of New Hampshire Extension