Japanese Knotweed

Species Description

Scientific name: *Fallopia japonica*

AKA: Japanese Bamboo, Pysen saethwr (Welsh), Polygonum cuspidatum, Reynoutria japonica

Native to: Japan, Taiwan, northern China

Habitat: Common in urban areas, particularly on waste land, railways, road sides and river banks

Tall herbaceous perennial with bamboo like stems. Often grows into dense thickets. Characteristic leaves and stems, persistence of last year’s dead canes and distinctive rhizome (underground root-like stems) enables year round identification.

Introduced in the early 19th century as an ornamental plant. Now common and widespread across the UK. Spreads rapidly in the wild by natural means and as a result of spread by humans. Spread is solely by vegetative means, either fragments of rhizome or stem. Does not produce seed in the UK. Negative impacts include outcompeting native flora, contributing to river bank erosion and increasing the likelihood of flooding. Can also cause significant delays and cost to development as well as structural damage (it can grow through asphalt and some other surfaces).

Japanese Knotweed is listed under Schedule 9 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 with respect to England, Wales and Scotland. As such it is an offence to plant or otherwise cause Japanese knotweed to grow in the wild. Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Japanese Knotweed is classified as controlled waste.

For details of legislation go to [www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation](http://www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation).

Key ID Features

- Zig-zag stems
- Shield shaped leaves
- Purple speckled stems
- Flat base
- Regular nodes (like bamboo)
- Rhizome crown at base of plant
- Cross-section
- Bright orange inside
- White shoots
- Lush green colour
Identification throughout the year

**Summer**

**Spring**

**Winter**

The species most likely to be confused with Japanese knotweed are those with which it is closely related: giant knotweed and its hybrid. Both are relatively uncommon in the UK. Key differences between these are given below.

### Similar Species

**Japanese Knotweed**
- Non-native
- **Fallopia sachalinensis**
- Much larger leaf
- Intermediate size and shape
- Lobed base
- Flat base
- Summer

**Giant Knotweed**
- Non-native
- **Fallopia x bohemica**
- Smaller leaf
- Up to 40cm
- Lobed base
- Flat base

**Hybrid**
- Non-native
- **Fallopia x bohemica**
- Intermediate size and shape
- Up to 23cm

### Distribution

Widespread and common across the UK. Notably extensive infestations are found in the south-west of England, south Wales and Greater London, however similarly extensive populations can also be found elsewhere.

References and further reading:

Photos from: Olaf Booy, Helen Parish, Max Wade, Vicky White