Japanese knotweed information for utility & engineering providers

Available leaflets

- **Identification**
- **Legal issues**
- **Planning, surveying & development**
- **Utility & engineering providers**
- **Route maintenance & vehicle recovery**
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Causing the spread of Japanese knotweed may make you liable to prosecution.

whether you are carrying out routine maintenance or are involved in larger development projects you could be at risk of causing the spread of Japanese knotweed. Utility operations such as trenching have the potential to cause extensive spread of this invasive weed.

Why is it your problem?

Excavation & site maintenance Japanese knotweed can reduce site access and cause structural damage to buildings, foundations and hard surfaces. If not dealt with quickly it can have significant economic implications in terms of structural repairs, in addition to costs and time required to control/eradicate it.

Water Japanese knotweed growing alongside drainage systems and watercourses can reduce access, increase the risk of river bank erosion and cause flooding hazards.

How does it spread?

Japanese knotweed is a highly invasive, vigorous plant, forming dense stands up to 3 metres in height. In Europe, it spreads by vegetative reproduction, meaning that new plants can regenerate from small fragments of plant material. Activities that cause disturbance e.g. engineering operations, linear trenching, construction of transport routes and building development can therefore accelerate its spread.

Flowers Japanese knotweed can produce seeds, but spread by this means is unlikely as they rarely germinate in the wild.

Stem New plants can grow from pieces of green stem in soil or water. Machinery such as strimmers or flails will spread knotweed.

Crown This part of the plant, where the stem meets the roots and new shoots develop, is capable of surviving drying and composting and can rapidly produce new canes when it comes into contact with soil.

Rhizome Fragments smaller than a fingernail, from these underground shoots, can produce new plants if disturbed.

What can you do?

Avoid spread by adopting a few basic rules and educating workers to check for it on site and in any imported materials such as top soil.

Make sure you can spot it! Ensure key site workers are able to identify Japanese knotweed and its changing appearance through the seasons. Equally important is the ability to identify knotweed rhizome (underground shoots). Use the identification leaflet and display our identification posters in prominent positions on site to inform workers. There is also a sticker for display in vehicle cabs as an extra reminder.

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PREVENT THE SPREAD OF KNOTWEED

www.cornwallknotweed.org.uk

Asking the question **'is knotweed present and who's involved?'**

Incorporate this question into your site risk assessment. Determine if knotweed is on site or on adjacent land and liaise with landowners if it poses a risk to the site. Underground material doesn't respect boundaries and can extend far more widely than the visible vegetation.

General rule If knotweed is within 10 metres of the proposed operation, you will need to take appropriate action.

Have a plan

Develop a **Knotweed Management Plan (KMP)** so that workers are familiar with correct procedures if knotweed is present. Your **KMP** should consider the following situations:

Is there an alternative solution? Does your work require you to disturb the knotweed or is it possible to re-route the work or haulage to avoid it? If work can be deferred, investigate control options with a qualified contractor to find a treatment programme that suits the location and timescale.

Avoid disturbance Cordon off the knotweed infestation to avoid disturbance. Remember that underground material can extend far more widely than the visible vegetation. Your boundary should reflect this, especially if excavating in the vicinity. If working on a site for extended periods, consider fencing off the knotweed to prevent access. Display a notice to inform other workers/agencies why the area is fenced off.

Gaining access If it is necessary to remove above-ground material to gain access, keep it to a minimum. Again, consider fencing off the remaining knotweed to prevent additional disturbance. Cut the stems, do **NOT** use flails or strimmers. Do **NOT** pull them, as this may dislodge crown material. The cut stems should be left *in situ* to dry out, either returned back to the stand or put on a suitable membrane surface (not soil or grass) to prevent re-establishment. Do not allow them to blow away or be dislodged by traffic. Ensure that the cut material cannot enter a watercourse, drain or ditch. When the stems have dried to a dark brown colour they are dead and can be burned. This is **NOT** the case with crown or rhizome material.

Use of machinery Refrain from using vehicles that are likely to trap plant material, particularly those with caterpillar tracks. Where it is necessary to use tracked machinery in an infested area, use a barrier textile and an appropriate surface as a base for vehicles to prevent spread. Clean and inspect all vehicles used on a knotweed site. Do this on a hard surface or plastic sheet using a dry stiff brush. Avoid washing, unless there is a containment facility. Pay particular attention to tyres and wheel arches, ensuring that all dislodged material is recovered and returned back to the contaminated area. **Don't allow any knotweed material to be spread around the site or enter a watercourse.**

Excavation If it is necessary to excavate we recommend that you seek specialist advice from a contractor to discuss your treatment options before you continue. These may include root barriers, bunding or burial methods.

Disposal Treat knotweed *in situ* where possible. All waste containing Japanese knotweed is considered a 'controlled waste'. If removed off site, it must be disposed of at an appropriately registered landfill site, by a licensed haulier. Keep this to a minimum by taking action early and discussing your options with a contractor.

If Japanese knotweed is already growing through an engineered structure

A restricted number of herbicides are approved for use on hard surfaces. A professional contractor will be able to advise which are suitable. Covering knotweed with hard surfaces is not a solution and may lead to further problems. It may be necessary to remove the hard surface to treat the infestation and protect the new structure with root barriers before re-laying**. Failure to treat the knotweed will result in a more serious problem at a later date.**

Help inform future control strategies

Cornwall Council operates a mapping database for knotweed in Cornwall. By recording your knotweed sightings you can help inform future control strategies. Visit the website and enter details of the location and the area covered by the knotweed stand.

www.cornwallknotweed.org.uk

Additional resources

More information is available at **www.cornwallknotweed.org.uk**

The Environment Agency's **Knotweed Code of Practice** provides guidance for managing Japanese knotweed on development sites and includes information on waste disposal, knotweed identification and a **KMP** template. Available at **www.environment-agency.gov.uk**

We want to ensure that your needs are met. If you would like this information in any other format please contact:
The Corporate Equality & diversity team
Email: equality@cornwall.gov.uk