

Japanese Knotweed



Image courtesy of Robbie Murphy

Scientific Name: *Fallopia japonica* **Irish Name:** Gliúneach bhiorach

Japanese knotweed is classified as one of the top 100 worst invasive species worldwide and is one of the most problematic invasive alien species in Ireland. It is very common and widely distributed across a variety of habitat types in Ireland and is most prominent on roadsides, waste ground and in wetland habitats where it out competes native species and forms dense thickets.

Japanese knotweed is native to Japan, China, and parts of Korea and Taiwan. It is not as problematic in those countries as it has natural enemies that keep it under control. Introduced to Europe as an ornamental plant in the 19th century, it quickly established wild populations.

How do you recognise it?

The stem have a green hollow bamboo-like appearance and are dotted with dark blue-purple speckles. The leaves are oval with a pointed tip, and have a distinctive zig-zag growth pattern on the stem. The off-white coloured flowers are small and clustered and hang from the joint of the stem and the leaf. They flower from August to October. The roots are tough, thick and wood-like in their appearance. If snapped they show a bright orange colour inside and have a consistency similar to that of a carrot. New rhizome growth (its root structure) is white in appearance and can be delicate. These root structures can extend up to 7 m in a lateral or sideways direction (but usually only up to 5 m), and 2 m deep from the overground parent plant.



Images courtesy of Cork County Council Heritage Unit

This information is excerpted from the full leaflet "Control and Management of Invasive Plant Species — Japanese Knotweed". It was prepared by Cork County Council Heritage Unit as an action of the Cork County Biodiversity Action Plan, 2012, and which can be downloaded from:

<https://www.corkcoco.ie/en/arts-heritage-irish-language/publications-documents-links>

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Invasive Alien Species

Invasive alien species are animals and plants that are introduced accidentally or deliberately into the wild where they are not normally found, and which have adverse impacts on the environment, usually by out competing native species for natural resources.

What should you do if you find Japanese knotweed?

If you do find Japanese knotweed on your property, the most important thing that you can do is prevent any further spread of the species. In fact, it is against the law to plant, disperse, allow dispersal or cause the spread of Japanese knotweed. Do not trim, cut, flail or chip the plants as tiny fragments can regenerate new plants and make the problem even more difficult to manage. It is also advised not to dig, move or dump soil which may contain plant material as this may contribute to its spread. It grows fast, can grow through concrete and tarmac, it forms large thickets and can cause serious structural damage.



Japanese knotweed can be controlled successfully through the appropriate use of herbicides by a competent person. However, it is advised to prepare a management plan and to get expert help before tackling a large infestation of Japanese knotweed.

Further information regarding best practise techniques for the control and management of Japanese knotweed can be found on the Invasive Species Ireland website at www.invasivespeciesireland.com To record sightings and records of Japanese knotweed or any other invasive alien species, log on to the National Biodiversity Data Centre at www.biodiversityireland.ie