

Target Invasive Species

Japanese knotweed *Polygonum cuspidatum*



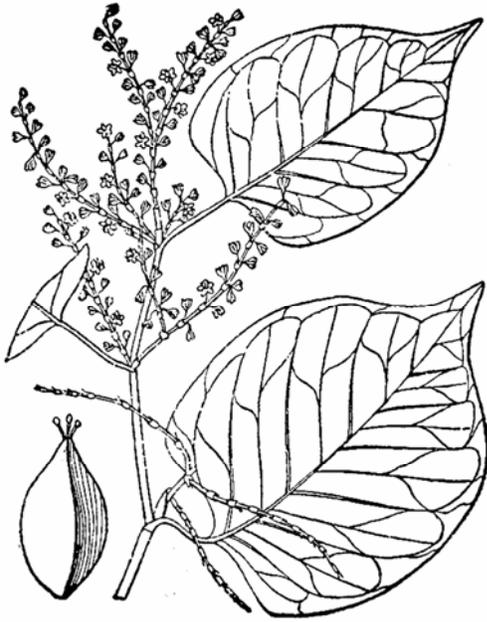
Description

Japanese knotweed is a herbaceous perennial that forms large clumps up to 13 feet tall. The smooth stems are stout and hollow like bamboo, and they show little branching. The leaves are broadly ovate, 2-6 inches long and taper to a point. The plants are dioecious (male and female flowers on separate plants), and

bloom in late summer and early fall. The greenish-white flowers are very small, and are arranged in branched sprays from the leaf axils. When in full bloom, the plant has masses of flowers all along the stem. The seeds are held in winged, triangular, shiny black-brown achenes that are generally wind dispersed, but can also be dispersed by water and by transportation of fill dirt. The plant also produces long rhizomes (up to 20 m in length) that allow the plant to spread quickly locally, and when rhizome fragments are transported to new sites they can initiate a new population.

Habitat

Japanese knotweed tolerates a wide range of soil types, pH levels, and nutrient levels. It prefers open areas, but can tolerate shade. It has become a characteristic species of floodplain forests throughout northern New Jersey and the Inner Coastal Plain. It typically forms dense monocultures along the banks of rivers and streams. It also grows on the margins of ponds and lakes, open woods and thickets, meadows and successional fields. It invades disturbed areas, such as ditches, roadsides, dredge spoils, and recently cleared or filled areas. Once established, it quickly spreads into moist or damp soils in adjacent undisturbed natural plant communities.



Threats

The early spring emergence of Japanese knotweed and its dense growth prevent indigenous species from establishing, in turn reducing species diversity and wildlife habitat. Because Japanese knotweed favors damp areas and areas that have been disturbed, riparian corridors are particularly at risk. It can cause flooding by decreasing water flow through stream channels. Once established, it is extremely persistent.

Control

Small stands can be controlled by repeatedly cutting the stems during the growing season, and by revegetating once knotweed growth is reduced. All plant parts should be removed from the site. Digging out rhizomes creates soil disturbance and may spread rhizome

fragments. Shading with black plastic or shade cloth may also reduce growth. Large stands can be treated effectively with herbicides, but many of the most effective herbicides are nonselective and may persist in the soil.

Source: An Overview of Nonindigenous Plant Species in New Jersey, New Jersey Dept of Environmental Protection Natural and Historic Resources Group, Parks and Forestry. www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/natural/invasivereport.pdf.

Photograph by Elaine Haug. Provided by Smithsonian Institution, Department of Systematic Biology-Botany. USA, VA, Woodbridge, Occoquan National Wildlife Refuge. <http://plants.usda.gov>.

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