INVASIVE SPECIES FACT SHEET

Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*)

photo by: KSNPC Staff

Description: Japanese knotweed is in the Buckwheat family (Polygonaceae). It is an upright shrub-like perennial that grows to heights of 1-3 meters (3-10 feet). The stems are stout, smooth, and erect, with swelling at the leaf axils. The plant reproduces primarily vegetatively through its long, stout rhizomes.

The ovate leaves vary in size but are normally 5-15 cm (2-6 in) long, 5-12 cm (2-5 in) wide, and pointed at the tip.

The minute flowers are greenish-white and occur in branched sprays in August or September. The fruit is winged with small, shiny, triangular seeds 8-9 mm (3/8 in) long.

Habitat: Japanese knotweed was introduced to the U.S. from Japan in the late 1800s as an ornamental used for erosion control and landscape screening. It is capable of adapting to a variety of environments including full shade, high temperatures, high salinity, and drought. It is typically found near water sources, in low-lying areas, on utility rights-of-way, and on old home sites.

Distribution: Japanese knotweed is found in the eastern and western U.S. and in some central midwestern states. In Kentucky, it is found in scattered areas throughout the commonwealth including but not exclusive to Barren, Bath, Bell, Boone, Bracken, Caldwell, Calloway, Campbell, Estill, Franklin, Garrard, Greenup, Hardin, Knox, Laurel, Lewis, McCracken, Perry, Rowan, and Wolfe counties. If you have seen it in other counties, please contact KSNPC.

Threat: Japanese knotweed can easily escape cultivated gardens where it is used as a landscaping plant. It spreads quickly and forms dense thickets that out-compete native vegetation. It is particularly invasive in riparian zones where it can survive severe flood events and rapidly colonize scoured shores and islands.

Control: For small populations or in areas where herbicides cannot be used, pull out the plant by hand or with a grubbing hoe. Be careful to remove the entire plant including all roots and runners. All plant parts should be bagged and removed from the site.

For areas where the plant has established among desirable native vegetation, cut the stem 5 cm above ground level and immediately apply a solution of 25% glyphosate (Roundup) or triclopyr (Garlon) and 75% water to the cut stump. Repetition of this treatment may be necessary if sprouting occurs from the stump. This method is not effective at low temperatures or if the ground is frozen.

Large populations can best be controlled using a foliar spray. Apply a 2% solution of Roundup or Garlon 3A and water until leaves are wet but not dripping. An ideal time of year to spray is late spring, on a sunny day when the plant is actively growing.

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