



Tool Box Talk

Focus on Performance

Japanese Knotweed

Sust. 24

What?

Japanese knotweed is a non-native species introduced as an ornamental plant in the nineteenth century. It is common along riverbanks, canals, motorway and rail embankments and on derelict land.

Japanese knotweed shoots are red in colour, growing up annually. It grows rapidly and over time, large stands are formed. The mature stands are formed from hollow cane-like stems, green with red flecks. Its leaves are green and heart-shaped and it produces sprays of small white flowers in late summer/early autumn. Over winter, stands die back leaving just dry stems.

Why?

Japanese knotweed outcompetes native plant species, contributes to river bank erosion, increasing the likelihood of flooding. It can also cause delays and cost to developments; removing Japanese knotweed contaminated waste from site can be expensive. Japanese knotweed shoots can grow through tarmac and some other surfaces.

Japanese knotweed is listed in legislation as an invasive species. It is illegal to spread it or cause it to grow in the wild.

How?

- Do not disturb Japanese knotweed by tracking through it. If possible fence off with a signed exclusion zone.
- If Japanese knotweed is known to be within or adjacent to a work area, do not clear vegetation or excavate within its vicinity unless you have been briefed on the Japanese knotweed management plan or method statement for correct methods handling and disposal.
- Do not deposit Japanese knotweed vegetation or soil containing its rhizomes with other uncontaminated material, directly onto the ground or where there is risk of spreading (e.g. within 10m of a watercourse or drains).
- Do not cut down Japanese knotweed using tools which shred or cut into small pieces (e.g. flails and strimmers).
- Stop work immediately within 7m of any identified stand. Report any discoveries of Japanese knotweed after works have started to your supervisor or the site management team.



Pictures: Non-Native Species Secretariat

Questions

1. How might you recognise Japanese knotweed?
2. Why is Japanese knotweed a problem on construction sites?
3. Before working in a Japanese knotweed area, what would you need to be briefed on?

If you have any queries regarding the content of this tool box talk please contact your Sustainability Advisor or Line Manager.