

## HOME BUILDING SURVEY – JAPANESE KNOTWEED – GENERAL ADVICE

The notes below are taken from the Environment Agency article dated 5<sup>th</sup> September 2013 on the website [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk). This guidance is given with the best intentions but nothing in this advice shall create or be deemed to create any obligations whether expressed or implied.

**Japanese knotweed** – Was introduced in Britain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as an ornamental plant. Over time it has spread to a range of habitats including road sides, river banks, derelict land and gardens.

**What Japanese knotweed looks like** – Lush green in colour. Shovel shaped leaves. A stem that is bamboo/rhubarb like in appearance. Produces white flowers around September or October. Detailed images are available on the internet.

**How Japanese knotweed spreads** – It spreads through its crown, underground rhizome stem and stem segments rather than dispersing seeds. The weed can cause damage below concrete and tarmac and come up through resulting cracks and damage buildings and roads. Rhizome segments can remain dormant in soil for twenty years before producing new plants.

**What to do if you see Japanese knotweed** – If you have Japanese knotweed on your land you may be causing a nuisance to surrounding properties. If Japanese knotweed is on a neighbouring property and causing nuisance to you, co-operate with the adjacent land owner and seek to control the problem rather than resort to legal action. The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 states that it is an offence to plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild any plant listed in Schedule 9 of Part I of the Act. This lists over thirty plants including Japanese knotweed. The Environment Agency is responsible for ensuring that knotweed waste is managed and disposed of in accordance with the knotweed code of practice. Home office guidance now states that Council Officers or the police can use community protection notices to stop or prevent people allowing growth of this plant.

**How to control Japanese knotweed** – The Japanese knotweed code of practice can be downloaded. The contractor must be registered with the Environment Agency as a waste carrier. If you do not need to remove the knotweed urgently a combination of herbicide treatment and careful excavation should eventually remove the problem. To find a contractor to remove Japanese knotweed and other invasive plants search the online waste directory. **Chemical control** - Japanese knotweed is sensitive to a range of herbicides. The most effective time to apply herbicides is late summer. Contractors must have a National Proficiency Test Council (NPTC) certification. The permission of the Environment Agency is required before herbicides can be used in or near water courses. Herbicide treatment may have to be used for at least three years before Japanese knotweed stops growing back. Even when the plant stops growing back, any soil removed from the area is likely to have dormant rhizomes and must be disposed of in accordance with the knotweed code of practice. **Physical control** – Cutting can be used to reduce underground biomass. Studies have shown that with four cuts a year the plant loses vigour and underground biomass. The first careful cut should be carried out when the first shoots appear and the last cut should be done before the plant dies back in autumn. Cut stems should be thoroughly dried before they are burned or taken to landfill. Treating fully grown stems in the late summer provides the most effective herbicide control.

**Disposing of Japanese knotweed** – Some Local Authorities offer a collection service or have a list of sites which can accept Japanese knotweed waste. Search the online Environment Agency website. **Controlled burning** - Japanese knotweed waste can be burned on site under controlled conditions and subject to local bylaws. Businesses need to inform the Environment Agency by calling 03708 506506 and may need a D7 exemption for burning waste in the open. Private individuals should consult with the Local Authority concerning good practice. **Burial** – Soil containing Japanese knotweed material and burned remains of Japanese knotweed may be buried on site where it was produced. The material should be covered with a root barrier membrane and then buried at least 5 metres deep with inert fill or top soil. Anyone burying Japanese knotweed waste needs to inform the Environment Agency at least one week before work commences by calling 03708 506506. Unlikely to be a practical solution in a garden.

**RICS Japanese knotweed information paper** – This has five categories of risk posed by Japanese knotweed so that mortgage lenders can make a decision to lend on a property which has a Japanese knotweed problem. Category 1 Japanese knotweed not found. Category 2 deals where Japanese knotweed is located more than 7 metres away from the boundary and then goes up to Category 5 where Japanese knotweed is seen within 7 metres of a habitable building and has caused damage to outbuildings, paths and walls. At the discretion of the lender but certainly with Category 4 and 5 a specialist knotweed assessment would be required to propose a management plan to deal with the problem. Information available on the RICS website. 04/10/2016