



Invasive Plant Alert¹

Giant knotweed

Polygonum sachalinense F. Schmidt ex Maxim.

Giant knotweed is native to Asia. It was introduced to the United States as a garden ornamental, soil stabilizer, and for forage it has since become a nuisance species and is classified as an invasive species in 8 states.

Where to Look

Giant knotweed is present in 27 states and 7 providences including throughout the Mid-Atlantic.

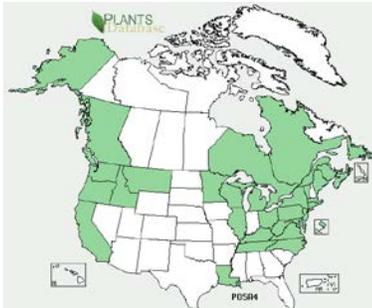


Figure 1 Distribution. Plants Database, USDA

Giant knotweed readily establishes in areas of human disturbance, including, but not limited to: meadows, roadsides, railroad and utility right-of-ways, stream banks and gardens. It is able to establish in sites varying in sun exposure.

Identifying the Plant

Giant knotweed is a perennial bamboo-like shrub that grows to over 12 feet tall. The stems are light green and hollow with reddish joints in a zig-zag pattern.

The leaves are alternate, petiolate, cordate (heart-shaped), with entire margins (toothless), and smooth. Leaves can be anywhere from 6-14 inches in length, but are most commonly more than 1 foot.

Giant knotweed has small creamy white to greenish flowers that bloom on short racemes in leaf axils. They are approximately 4 inches in length. The flowers bloom in late July – October. The fruit is an achene contained within a papery, 3-sided sheath.

Giant knotweed resembles Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*) but is distinguished by the cordate leaves and leaves that are much larger than the axillary flowers.



Figure 2 Cordate leaves. Glenn Miller, Oregon Dept. of Agriculture

How to get rid of it?

Giant knotweed stands are difficult to eradicate as it reproduces mainly by rhizomes which can be dispersed both by natural causes and by man-made disturbances to the soil. Additionally, cut or broken

stems will root if left on moist soil or put directly in water.

Manual removal of small stands can be successful as long as care is taken to remove as much of the rhizomes as possible.

Chemical herbicides, such as Glyphosate, are effective. If plants are established in wetlands, extra care should be taken to use aquatic approved herbicides.



Figure 3 Stand. Glenn Miller, Oregon Dept. of Agriculture

Resources

Forest Service Web. September 2013.

http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/invasive_plants/weeds/giant-knotweed.pdf

New Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team. September 2013. www.njisst.org

Oregon Department of Agriculture. September 2013. http://cms.oregon.gov/ODA/PLANT/WEEDS/Pages/profile_giantknotweed.aspx

¹ This species has been identified as a potential or emerging threat to natural areas in the mid-Atlantic region