

# WEED OF THE MONTH

## October KNOTWEEDS

**Japanese knotweed** (*Polygonum cuspidatum*); **Giant knotweed** (*P. sachalinense*); **Bohemian knotweed**, (*P. bohemicum*) and **Himalayan knotweed** (*P. polystachyum*)



Japanese, giant, Bohemian and Himalayan knotweeds are all non-native plants from the buckwheat family. They are bamboo-like perennials that can grow to over 15 feet in height, but die down completely in the winter. Stems are smooth, stout and swollen at joints where the leaf meets the stem. The tiny greenish-white flowers occur in attractive, branched sprays in summer.

They are aggressive colonizers that generally spread by rhizomes, but sometimes by seed.

Japanese and giant knotweeds frequently hybridize, producing Bohemian knotweed. Most of the knotweed in Jefferson County is currently believed to be Bohemian. Giant and Japanese knotweed are distinguished from each other primarily by the size of the leaf and height of the plant—giant being much larger with egg-shaped, slightly pointed leaves up to one foot in length. Japanese knotweed leaves are two to six inches and Bohemian is intermediate between the two. Himalayan knotweed (which is less common) has a much narrower leaf.

Knotweeds are found in many places throughout Jefferson County, particularly along rivers and creeksides. A major infestation can be found along the Big Quilcene River.

### WHY BE CONCERNED?

- Knotweed spreads quickly to form dense thickets that out-compete native plants and greatly alter natural ecosystems.
- Stream banks infested with knotweed do not provide the habitat structure that mature shrubs and trees provide, especially for nesting birds and bats.
- Knotweed prevents tree establishment along stream banks. These trees are sources of large woody debris essential for regulating stream energy and creating the channel complexity that salmon need for spawning and rearing.
- Once established, knotweed populations are very difficult to eradicate.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **DO NOT** buy or plant any of the invasive knotweed species!
- Mechanical control success varies. Digging is **NOT** recommended because knotweeds have extensive rhizomes and any fragments will result in new plants. Cutting the stems will just result in new shoot growth.
- Repeated mowing during the growing season eventually reduces the root reserves, and sometimes, control is achieved.
- **DO NOT** throw stems or root pieces in rivers, lakes, or streams! They can sprout and cause a new infestation.
- Chemical control is most effective. Contact the Weed Board for recommendations.

For more information call **Jefferson County Noxious Weed Control Board** at (360) 379-5610 Ext. 205

or email [noxiousweeds@co.jefferson.wa.us](mailto:noxiousweeds@co.jefferson.wa.us)  
or see <http://www.co.jefferson.wa.us/WeedBoard>