

“B” Rated Weeds

A weed of economic importance which is regionally abundant, but may have limited distribution in some counties

Japanese knotweed
Polygonum cuspidatum

Other common names: Crimson beauty, Mexican bamboo, Japanese fleeceflower

USDA symbol: POCU6
ODA rating: B



Introduction: Japanese knotweed is a robust growing polygonum, native to Eurasia and introduced to the United States as an ornamental and for stream bank stabilization. Frequently planted in logging camps and along the headwaters of streams during the 1900's, flood events have transported root masses from these early plantings downstream, creating huge infestations on many Oregon rivers.

Distribution in Oregon: Though the species can tolerate cold temperatures, the mild temperatures of Western Oregon provide it with the best climate for growth. Most coastal and Willamette Valley streams host populations of knotweed with the Nehalem and Molalla Rivers two of the most severely infested. A large infestation was also located in Hell Canyon.

Description: Japanese knotweed is a deciduous perennial growing up to 9 foot tall. Annually growing from deep-rooted creeping rhizomes, it forms extensive clonal patches that are expensive to treat or remove. Stout hollow stems are greenish red, with nodes. Leaves are short stalked, 6-8" long by 4-5" wide. Japanese knotweed flowers are greenish-white to cream in large plume-like clusters at the ends of the stems. Bloom time occurs late July, to October. It establishes most often along riparian areas, though many reports place them in forest understories, forest edges, yards and gravel operations.

Impacts: Japanese knotweed grow vigorously along roadsides, waste areas, streams, and ditch banks and create dense colonies that exclude native vegetation and greatly alter natural tree regeneration. Large infestations can be reduced with approved herbicides, but treatments are costly and time consuming. It poses a significant threat in riparian areas, where it disperses during flood events rapidly colonizing scoured shorelines, islands and adjacent forestland.

Biological controls: One biological control insect, a psyllid is under final review.

