

# To be, or knot to be

Nic Seal, one of the UK's leading experts on Japanese knotweed, explains what you need to know should you discover this invasive plant on a construction site.

If you have a site you intend to develop which has knotweed present you should remove it before any construction works commence. Japanese knotweed is simply one thing in life that should not be ignored, otherwise you'll incur delays and major expense at a later stage in the project. The earlier the problem is identified and dealt with correctly, the less expensive it will be.

Remember, if you cause knotweed to be spread off site, you could find yourself at the wrong end of criminal proceedings under either the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 or the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Offences under these Acts can result in custodial sentences.

Soil contaminated with Japanese knotweed is considered 'controlled waste' and must be disposed of at an appropriately licensed landfill site. If you consign knotweed infested soils off site other than strictly in accordance with these legislative requirements, whether intentionally or not, you will run the risk of prosecution.

## The implications for a site

The costs in delay and costs of removal can be very high, often rendering the land



uneconomic to develop. The costs can escalate even further if the problem is ignored. A beautifully finished house with knotweed growing in the garden, through the drive and patio, and through the floor into the kitchen will make the sale very difficult indeed.

However, if it is dealt with correctly by a specialist able to provide appropriate guarantees, your problems should go away.

It is currently very difficult to secure finance on property affected by Japanese knotweed, with all major lenders insisting on professional treatment backed by insurance backed guarantees.

## Dealing with Japanese knotweed

In-situ herbicide treatment is an economic approach, but not where it lies in area that is likely to be disturbed, as is the case on most construction and landscaping projects. So unless you can fence off the area and be sure no one will inadvertently disturb it, forget about this as a suitable method.

Be very wary of anyone who tells you otherwise, the likelihood is that at best the herbicide will make the plant go temporarily dormant, ready to grow throughout the site when you disturb the soil. That means your options are limited to physical removal.

The traditional way to remove Japanese knotweed is known as 'Dig & Dump', but it is referred to by the Environment Agency as the "method of last resort". If this method has to be used it pays to have a specialist supervising the work to not only ensure that all legal requirements are met, but also to ensure all, and only, Japanese

knotweed infested soil is removed.

Expert supervision can result in significantly reduced volumes, thereby saving cost on haulage, disposal, landfill tax and buying in clean fill. The cost of haulage and landfill taxes makes this by far the most expensive option both financially and environmentally.

## Onsite processing

A far better method is Xtract, developed and patented by Environet UK Ltd. Rather than cart off the infested soil, it's processed on site to remove all the viable rhizome, saving massive costs in haulage, disposal and landfill tax.

The processed soil is re-used on site, avoiding the cost of import of clean fill. It can be carried out at any time of year, usually in a matter of days or weeks, and typically costs less than 50 per cent of alternatives such as 'Dig & Dump'. It is the best environmental option with no herbicide use, and no waste.

The process was recently featured in a COIB programme entitled 'Building Tomorrow' produced in partnership by ITN Productions, which can be found at [www.environetuk.com](http://www.environetuk.com). And finally, being an on-site remediation technique, it is eligible for Land Remediation Tax Relief potentially saving you even more money.

## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

You can find out more about Japanese knotweed and removal by circling **readerlink 045** or by visiting [www.environetuk.com](http://www.environetuk.com)