

In a knot

Problems with Japanese Knotweed are particularly pertinent at the moment because April marks the start of the growing season. Not only that, but flooding has been proven to significantly increase the risk of its spreading. So what do you need to know and what questions should you be asking before you make a decision on how best to deal with it? Nic Seal of Environet UK offers some advice:



1 How big is my problem?
Your Japanese knotweed may look fairly small and contained but don't underestimate the scale of the potential problem. The plant has an extensive rhizome system extending 2 - 3 metres laterally from the visible plant and up to 3 metres deep. You get spectacular spread of the plant by disturbing the soil, as fragments of rhizome regenerate into new infestations, growing to a height

of around 3m in only a couple of growing seasons.

2 Can Japanese knotweed damage my property?

Yes. In its quest for water and light, Japanese knotweed can exploit expansion joints in concrete, cavity walls, weaknesses in asphalt, broken mortar between paving slabs or bricks. It can also damage drains and sewers. While structural damage is rare in most residential situations, if left unchecked a mature infestation of Japanese knotweed can cause damage.

3 Do I have a legal obligation to get rid of it?

Whilst it is not illegal to have Japanese knotweed on your land, it is illegal to introduce it or to allow it to spread in the wild under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

4 Should I have a site survey?

An initial discussion should help to clarify the extent of the problem and in most cases photographs will be requested prior to quoting. For larger areas a good contractor will be keen to come and see the site for themselves before

quoting.

5 What are my treatment options? There is more than one and the right solution for you will depend on the site conditions, your plans for the site, your budget and time scales. The available methods fall into two broad categories: in situ herbicide treatment and physical removal. Make sure you have the pros and cons of all the options explained fully – they can vary greatly in terms of financial and environmental cost as well as in time taken and efficacy.



6 Is herbicide treatment the most cost effective?

In situations where the soil is not going to be disturbed and you have time on your side – in other words, where there is absolutely no plan to build or develop the land in the foreseeable future – herbicide treatment is probably the most cost effective. To ensure total success, though, it is usually necessary to treat the plant several times over the course of a growing season.

7 If I opt for excavation, can I reduce the cost by disposing of the soil myself?

In short, no. Any soil contaminated with Japanese knotweed is considered 'controlled waste' and must be disposed of at an appropriate licensed landfill site. Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 it is a criminal offence not to dispose of contaminated soil correctly. Using the traditional "dig and dump" method can be expensive on the wallet as well as the environment as multiple road trips in 8-wheelers to licensed disposal sites are required. It's worth considering an on-site solution that minimises the amount of waste to landfill and allows you to reuse the soil on site.



BUILDING ADVICE

8 Can I buy or sell property or land with Japanese knotweed?

Whilst you can, in theory, buy or sell, in practice it is virtually impossible to secure finance on land or property with Japanese knotweed on or adjacent to it. In most cases this means there's no deal until the problem is dealt with. UK banks and lending institutions are usually satisfied if an approved contractor can guarantee their treatment of the problem.

9 Is the work guaranteed?

Most companies offer a guarantee but do read the small print – these guarantees are not yet insurance backed although may rely on professional indemnity insurance if things go wrong. Even more important is to make sure you have a detailed post treatment management plan agreed with your contractor. It's easy to negate a guarantee or warranty by disturbing the soil within a year of herbicide treatment, for example.

10 Will it come back?

Depending on the treatment method, and notably with herbicide treatments, there is a possibility of some minor regrowth but this should be covered in any post treatment management plan. Any regrowth is initially weak and dealt with swiftly and correctly should not pose any lasting problem.



MORE INFORMATION

For further information and advice on the eradication of Japanese Knotweed by Enviro UK use the reader enquiry number 153



I will never buy another Skymaster™ ladder again.

I don't have to, I got this Zarges Skymaster™ 10 years ago.

German engineering means every part of the Skymaster™ ladder, from the aluminium stile guides to its nylon anti-splay straps are of the highest quality, ensuring a longer, safer life span for the product and comes with a 10 year manufacturers guarantee.



Call Zarges UK today on **01908 641118** or Email. sales@zarges.co.uk

www.zargesskymaster.co.uk

Readerlink enquiry 024