



The  
Knotweed  
Company  
Ltd

# Japanese knotweed

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A guide for property owners



Japanese knotweed is prevalent throughout the UK. So, what should you do if it is on your property or on neighbouring land?

Well, first of all: **don't panic**. Much of what you hear about knotweed is exaggerated and sensationalised – and panicking can often lead to doing something that makes your knotweed situation worse. Just because knotweed is on your property doesn't automatically mean the house will fall down or a mortgage will be refused.

Don't worry and seek expert advice: be assured the vast majority of knotweed cases are entirely manageable.

## Who are The Knotweed Company?

The Knotweed Company was founded in 2010 to provide advice on, and practical resolutions to, invasive weed issues. We avoid sensationalism and scaremongering, and combine the necessary knowledge, experience and skills to control and eradicate Japanese knotweed and other problem weeds effectively and safely. We recognise the importance of understanding related environmental concerns and have the knowledge to provide workable solutions that take these extraneous issues into account.

The Knotweed Company proudly contributes to, and helps develop, Best Japanese Knotweed Control Practices in England and Wales. Our staff comprise qualified and experienced personnel, with their knowledge of dealing with knotweed far preceding their involvement with the Company. All of our field-based staff have either the PCAQT or the CSJK (Technician and Surveying) qualifications, which are the standards of excellence in the industry. We are accredited with the PCA (Property Care Association), as well as Trustmark, Amenity Forum, CHAS (Contractors Health and Safety), Constructionline, the NAAC (National Association of Agricultural Contractors) and the FSB (Federation of Small Businesses). In addition, we are registered with the Environment Agency as a licensed Waste Carrier.

We have a Head Office in the Midlands, a Regional Office in the South of England and several home-based Regional Operatives all over the country. Consequently, we are able to operate throughout England and Wales.

## How do I identify knotweed?

If you suspect you have found knotweed but aren't sure, you can always take a photograph and e-mail it to us ([enquiries@jkweed.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@jkweed.co.uk)) for a free no-obligation identification. The following images may also help.



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## What is Japanese knotweed and why should I care about it?

Japanese knotweed is an invasive plant that was first introduced to the UK in the mid-1800s. Although unable to produce viable seeds here, it is highly regenerative and can produce new growth from fragments of itself. Disturbance and incorrect disposal have been largely responsible for the species spreading so aggressively across the British Isles.

Japanese knotweed can cause damage to man-made structures (although its ability to do this is often overstated – see overleaf). Because of this, mortgage lenders in 2009 took the position of refusing to lend on properties where knotweed was within the property boundaries or on adjoining land. In the years since making that decision, most mortgage lenders have now relaxed their stance and are more likely to lend on such properties if:

- A knotweed survey has been carried out by a recognised specialist
- There is no evidence of structural damage to the habitable building
- A treatment programme is in place, supplied by a reputable specialist (many mortgage lenders specify the contractor has to be a member of the Property Care Association)
- The treatment programme is accompanied by an extended warranty period (usually 5 or 10 years) and is protected by insurance (i.e. an Insurance Backed Guarantee, otherwise known as an IBG)



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## What risk does Japanese knotweed actually present to my property?

There are some sources in the media (and even within the knotweed industry itself, sadly) who would like you to believe that the mere presence of Japanese knotweed on your property will result in your house imminently crashing down around your ears. This is simply not true. In reality, knotweed exacerbates existing flaws and weaknesses in made-made structures. If the foundations of a building are well constructed and in good repair, knotweed will do little to affect them. Knotweed is much more likely to impact on drains, block paving, weak/thin/damaged cement, decaying/soft tarmac and single skinned walls, such as those found in outbuildings and on boundaries.

## Why is a 7m distance so important?

Surveys and mortgage applications will highlight if knotweed is within 7m of a habitable space. This is because 7m is the distance up to which knotweed rhizomes (root system) have been known to spread. However, such distances are unusual and it is more common to find spread of around 2m from the visible growth (or 2-4m for larger, well-established infestations).

## What should I do if I find Japanese knotweed on my property?

Leave it alone. Attempts to cut down, mow, pull up or dig up knotweed results, more often than not, in spreading the plant to other areas. Disposing of knotweed material off-site (e.g. garden waste collection, local amenity tip, etc.) is illegal and subject to prosecution unless such material is disposed of by prior arrangement at a licenced landfill facility (which is expensive).

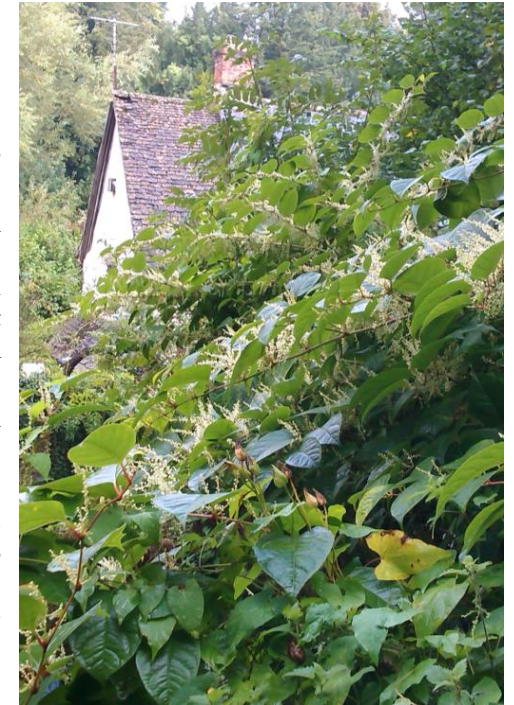
Home treatment programmes can also make the situation worse if conducted incorrectly – and even those carried out perfectly will not be recognised by mortgage lenders.



## Call in a Specialist

The Knotweed Company can provide:

- ❑ A formal Survey Report, to quantify the knotweed, the risk it presents to the building and the cost of remediation.
- ❑ A verification service – which can include free identification from e-mailed photographs or a formal Verification Report to confirm knotweed is not evident on a property where it has been erroneously identified or implied.
- ❑ A full range of options for remediation and treatment of knotweed.
- ❑ Extended warranties.
- ❑ A choice of Insurance-Backed Guarantee products (IBG on the warranty period, or a TMIBG product offering insurance from the first day of the treatment programme and covering a period of up to 10 years – see overleaf ).



*If required, The Knotweed Company can supply useful identification guides to help you recognise knotweed in its various forms. Please contact us for free copies.*

*Please note The Knotweed Company also deals with other invasive plant species, such as Giant hogweed, Himalayan balsam, bamboo, etc. Visit our website for more information.*

## Co-operate with your neighbours

If knotweed is growing on adjacent land it could spread onto your property (if it hasn't already) and, if left untreated, could affect the offer of a mortgage and the provision of warranties. Don't ignore it. Legislation exists that can help when dealing with neighbouring knotweed, but there are no guarantees of outcome and any private prosecution will prove expensive even if you win.

**It is always best to talk to your neighbour and agree a mutually beneficial outcome if at all possible.**



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### What is an Insurance Backed Guarantee and what does it cover?

'Insurance-backed guarantee' is an often used phrase in the industry and it can be misleading. Insurance does not guarantee eradication and will not provide protection against structural damage. What it will cover is an assurance that an approved contractor will be in attendance throughout the warranty period (and treatment period, if covered by the Policy), even if, for whatever reason, the company you originally contracted has ceased trading prior to completion.

Mortgage lenders are very keen on Insurance-backed guarantees, particularly if accompanied by extended warranty periods (usually 5 or 10 years beyond completion of treatment).

All Insurance packages offered by The Knotweed Company are supplied by Guarantee Protection Insurance Ltd, who are authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority. Any Insurance product is granted entirely at the discretion of the Insurer and as such The Knotweed Company cannot guarantee your eligibility for these products. There are currently two Products available. The first is the standard Insurance Backed Guarantee (IBG), which covers the warranty period only and as such only comes into effect once treatment has been completed. The IBG can cover up to ten years. The second is the Treatment, Monitoring and Insurance Backed Guarantee (TMIBG). This Product lasts 10 years in total but offers cover from day one. It applies to the treatment programme, the after-treatment monitoring and the warranty up to, but not exceeding, 10 years from the treatment commencement date. The TMIBG requires payment in full of the insurance, extended warranty and treatment programme as a single lump sum payment at commencement of the contract. It is important to note that Insurance is an optional requirement and exists purely as a 'peace of mind' measure (although many mortgage lenders insist on having them in place).



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### Knotweed do's and don'ts

<b>DO</b>	Consult a Japanese knotweed expert and implement a knotweed treatment programme as soon as possible.
<b>DO</b>	Prevent any disturbance of the plant, particularly during the growing season, and <u>prevent disturbance of the ground within at least 2m of the plant at any time of the year.</u>
<b>DO</b>	Be aware of the legal responsibilities of knotweed disposal and, if such disposal is absolutely necessary, ensure all off-site disposal takes place by prior agreement at a licensed landfill site.
<b>DON'T</b>	Mow or strim knotweed, as this will cause the knotweed to spread.
<b>DON'T</b>	Chop, cut or break green knotweed stems, as this could lead to knotweed spread unless disposed of properly and can impede a treatment programme. Pulling knotweed will initially encourage further growth, and is likely to pull up the highly infectious crowns and create both a disposal issue and the potential for knotweed spread.
<b>DON'T</b>	Use standard green waste / local amenity tip to dispose of any viable knotweed material or fly-tip, as this will encourage knotweed spread and put you in breach of the law.
<b>DON'T</b>	Allow knotweed material to leave site unless it is properly bagged or sheeted to prevent spillage en route.
<b>DON'T</b>	Break the law – knotweed material and soil containing knotweed material is classed as 'controlled waste' and must be disposed of accordingly.
<b>DON'T</b>	Dig out knotweed, as the rhizomes are likely to be extensive and deep and knotweed will regenerate from any rhizome remaining in the ground. Also, removal of knotweed material from the ground will create a disposal issue.
<b>DON'T</b>	Conduct any home treatment efforts, as this will impede a treatment programme and could invalidate the warranty on that programme.
<b>DON'T</b>	Cover the knotweed area, as any suppression will only be temporary and will impede a treatment programme.
<b>DON'T</b>	Chip knotweed material, as mechanical chippers do not kill the plant and could result in new growth wherever the chipped material is spread.
<b>DON'T</b>	Add Japanese knotweed to compost, as this can lead to knotweed growing in your compost heap.
<b>DON'T</b>	Allow knotweed to spread into adjacent properties, as this could result in legal action by your neighbour(s).



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