A Homeowner’s Guide to Small-Scale Knotweed Control

This pamphlet describes how to cut and treat knotweed with glyphosate, without surfactants. Surfactants are not necessary if the herbicide is placed inside a cut stem, as described in this pamphlet. Manufacturers recommend adding surfactants to glyphosate if the herbicide is sprayed. Roundup™, ShoreKlear Plus™, and other products are premixed with surfactants. Because these surfactants may harm amphibians, fish, and other wetland animals, these herbicide formulations are not approved for use in aquatic environments. Spraying glyphosate with surfactants on knotweed leaves may not effectively control mature plants.

Homeowners should take common-sense precautions: wear gloves when handling it, mix and store the glyphosate in something that contains spills, and follow directions on the label. A permit is needed from MDEQ when spraying herbicides in standing water.

The Oakland County Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) is a partnership of local townships, Oakland County, NOHLC and other conservation organizations collaborating to control invasive plants. Larger Knotweed infestations may require repeated treatments or different treatment options involving stronger herbicides and professional advice. More information is available from NOHLC, your township, and at:

- NOHLC.org/LearningOpportunities/invasives
- The Oakland County CISMA (stewardshipnetwork.org/oc-cisma)
- Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (michigan.gov/documents/dnr/knotweed)
- Midwest Invasive Species Information Network (misin.msu.edu/facts/Japanese+knotweed)
- Michigan Invasive Plant Network (MIPN.org)

Japanese and Giant Knotweed (Fallopia japonica and F. sachalinensis) are perennial shrubs that were introduced from Japan as ornamental plants. Knotweed grows up to ten feet tall, and its hollow stems resemble bamboo. Knotweed spreads by rhizomes and sprouts from fragments of root and stems, which are spread by water and other means. It particularly thrives on riverbanks, ditches, and wetlands. Because Japanese knotweed is so harmful to property values and the environment, it is illegal in Michigan to possess or plant this species without a permit.
Control strategies depend on the size of your Knotweed problem. Contact your township or NOHLC for information on licensed professionals with expertise controlling large infestations of Knotweed.

Small and young infestations in your yard may be cut and treated while the plant is flowering in late August. The small white flowers grow on zig-zag stems. The leaves have smooth edges and pointed tips.

After flowering the plant turns brown and goes dormant for the winter. The hollow stems last through winter and resemble bamboo. Chemical treatment of dormant stems is ineffective.

Winter stems are dry, brown, and hollow. This is not the time to treat.

The North Oakland Headwaters Land Conservancy (NOHLC) offers a Starter Kit To Control Invasive Plants. This starter kit contains a chemical-resistant plastic dropper bottle containing a little biodegradable purple dye. The dye (food coloring may also be used) makes the herbicide more visible and easy to use. ShoreKlear™ and other herbicide brands contain 53.8% of glyphosate with no surfactants added. Glyphosate is a herbicide which may be used in wetlands. Wearing gloves, fill the bottle halfway with glyphosate, then fill it with distilled water.