

Japanese Knotweed
Polygonum cuspidatum

Biology:

A fast-growing, herbaceous perennial with upright jointed stems and alternate leathery leaves that are broadly ovate. Established plants quickly grow into 3-6 ft. high thickets with extensive rhizomes. Flowers are small and greenish-white, developing in August and September and forming a mass of white over the plant when in full flower. Dead stems remain upright throughout the winter.

Habitat:

Commonly found in disturbed open areas such as roadways, forest edges, neglected gardens, stream and river banks, and edges of water bodies. It generally does not thrive under the shade of a forest canopy and is most problematic in wetland and riparian habitats.

Origin:

Native to eastern Asia.

NY and Adirondack Range:

Throughout NYS. It is one of the most common invasive plants along roads and streams in the Adirondacks.

Spread:

Introduced in the late 1800s as an ornamental. An interest in the plant's medicinal properties may have contributed to further plantings. Current spread occurs primarily from broken roots or stems that are transported by waterways and by thick underground rhizomes that may reach 50 feet in length.

Problems:

Japanese Knotweed's early spring emergence and dense growth prevent other species from becoming established. Stems produce dense stands that crowd all other vegetation, degrading native plant and wildlife habitat. Control is difficult due to vigorous rhizomes that form a deep mat. Plants can re-sprout from fragments and infestations are common along streams. During winter dormancy, the species standing biomass can be a fire hazard.



Inset shows flower