

Japanese Knotweed



Found in riparian areas where it outcompetes native species and can destabilize stream banks. Small root fragments can sprout to form new plants. Herbaceous perennial that forms large colonies of erect, arching stems (resembling bamboo). Plants reach up to 10' and the dead stalks remain standing through the winter.

Leaves

Simple, alternate, 3-4" wide and 4-6" long. Leaves are spade-shaped and more heart-shaped on young shoots. They have long petioles that are broad at the base and narrow to a fine point. The upper surface is dark green while the lower surface is pale green.

Stems

Round, smooth, and hollow with reddish-brown blotches.

Flowers

Creamy white or greenish; tiny 0.125" wide; borne in plume-like clusters in upper leaf axils near the end of stems. Bloom August through September.

Fruits & seeds

Seeds are small, triangular, shiny, black produced by female plants; rare since colonies seldom have both male and female plants. The seed is enclosed in a winged calyx that contributes to its buoyancy. The seeds have no dormancy requirement and germinate readily.

Roots

Roots are white and present along the rhizome. Plants can also produce adventitious roots on lower stems. Roots extend deeply into the soil creating a dense impenetrable mat.

Similar species

It has hollow stems with distinct raised nodes that give it the appearance of bamboo, though it is not related. Japanese knotweed is similar in appearance to Giant knotweed (invasive); they are known to hybridize. The best way to tell them apart is by their leaf bases, Japanese knotweed is squared off while Giant knotweed is heart shaped.



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