

JAPANESE KNOTWEED - IMPORTANT REPRODUCTION FINDINGS

By Ted Ritter (Vilas County Invasive Species Coordinator) May 7, 2009

The following is important but disturbing news regarding the ability of Japanese Knotweed to spread via seeds. Confusion over the plant's ability to reproduce both sexually and asexually vs. asexually only led Brock Woods (WDNR Research Ecologist) to conduct his own studies using Japanese knotweed plants growing in the Madison area. Details of his study follow, but in a nutshell, he has demonstrated the ability of this large, aggressive, very exotic plant to reproduce sexually in WI.

We have some large stands of Japanese knotweed in Vilas and Oneida Counties. One in particular, in the downtown area of Presque Isle, appears to have been intentionally planted some years ago. I am told that the stand is now considerably larger than when first planted. A newer, much smaller stand is now developing in another area of downtown Presque Isle just a few hundred feet away. Brock's findings might explain how the second population became unintentionally established.

While not yet widespread in northern WI, the likelihood of Japanese knotweed's steady expansion, especially in or along wetland areas, should cause us concern. Unlike species such as reed canary grass which has seemingly spread far beyond any hope of our controlling it, we have an opportunity to perhaps fight this one back.

1. Diligent searching for Japanese knotweed should be a priority this summer.
2. Cutting the stalks before seed production will interrupt sexual reproduction, but will not kill the aggressive root system.
3. Proper disposal of cut plants is very important to prevent unintentional asexual reproduction.
4. Proper fall (after frost) application of select herbicides by certified applicators is the best method of root control and is critical to overall control success.
5. Bio-control may someday be feasible, but there are presently no bio-control agents available in North America.

For additional information on Japanese knotweed I suggest the following websites:

<http://www.invasive.org/species/subject.cfm?sub=3414>

http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/fact/japanese_knotweed.htm

<http://mipn.org/Midwest%20Invasives%20Fact%20Sheets/PDF/knotweed.pdf>