

## Japanese Knotweed



The large leaves are almost as wide as they are long.

Common name: Japanese knotweed, Japanese bamboo  
Scientific name: *Polygonum cuspidatum*

**Description:** Japanese knotweed is a semi-woody perennial. It is fast growing and has hollow, bamboo-like stems that form dense leafy thickets 6-9 feet tall. Stems become tough and woody with age. The shoots arise from coarse, spreading rhizomes that can attain lengths up to 50 feet. Leaves are alternate and broadly ovate with pointed tips. The stalked blade is about 6 inches long by 4 inches wide. Plants produce either male or female flowers in white clusters at the upper leaf axils in late August and September. Female flowers can produce small 3-angled black-brown fruit, but seed production is rare.



Plants are either male or female. Both bear their white flowers on upper leaf axils.

**Impacts:** This plant is an aggressive exotic species that threatens Minnesota's riparian areas. It forms monocultures in riparian areas shading out other vegetation and leading to increased erosion.

**History:** Native to Japan, Japanese knotweed was introduced to the UK in 1825 as an ornamental. In the late 1800's it was brought to North America and quickly escaped cultivation. It is widespread in the eastern U.S. and is found in 38 of the lower 48 states including the Pacific coast states. It is widely scattered across Minnesota. It is still sold in the horticultural trade today.



The bamboo-like stalks give this plant the common name: Japanese bamboo.

**Habitat:** It prefers sunny, moist sites and is increasingly common along transportation corridors.

**If you suspect you have seen this plant in Minnesota: Contact  
Minnesota Department of Agriculture Invasive Species Exclusion  
Unit "Arrest the Pest" Hotline  
651-201-6684 (metro)  
1-888-545-6684 (toll free)**

Or email  
blane.white@state.mn.us