Knotweed:

A Growing Problem

What is it?

Four members of the Polygonum family: Japanese, Bohemian, Giant & Himalayan Knotweed. These shrub-like perennials grow from 10 – 16 feet in height; have large leaves and roots and rhizomes that often grow up to 30 feet long and 7 feet deep. Knotweeds spread primarily by fragments from these roots during floods or in contaminated soils. They can also spread by seed or by pieces of stem that have been cut from the parent plant.

Why is it a threat?

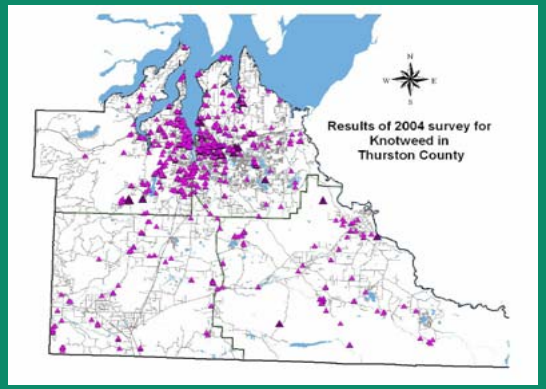
- Rapidly invades and alters sensitive riparian ecosystems.
- Shades and chokes out native plant species.
- Can survive severe flooding, root fragments lodge on scoured shorelines and islands, quickly establishing new colonies.
- Threatens salmon habitat by increasing siltation through erosion, burying gravel vital to spawning beds.
- Very difficult to control. Repeated efforts are necessary over a period of several seasons.

Japanese Knotweed

(*Polygonum cuspidatum*) Perennial species with numerous, reddish-brown freely branched hollow stems. The plant can reach 4 to 8 feet in height and is often shrubby. The leaves are four to 6 inches long and generally triangular with an abrupt point and a blunt leaf base. The whitish flower clusters are longer than the leaves and are borne in open, drooping panicles. Dead stalks are fairly persistent through the winter.

Giant Knotweed

(*Polygonum sachalinense*) Perennial with large, heart shaped leaves, often more than a foot long and 2/3 as wide. Hollow, jointed stems are swollen at the nodes giving a bamboo-like appearance. Can grow to more than 16 feet in height! The flower clusters of giant knotweed are sparse, relatively small compared to those of Japanese knotweed and have a greenish tint. Giant knotweed stems die back with the first frost.



Bohemian Knotweed

(*Polygonum bohemicum*) Hybrid of Japanese and Giant Knotweeds. Generally taller than Japanese Knotweed, with larger leaves. Stems are hollow and erect, minimally branched, and usually reddish-brown at maturity. Leaves are more oval rather than triangular. The leaf tip is tapered to blunt, and the base is slightly indented to deeply heart-shaped. White flower clusters are about the same length as the leaves.

Himalayan Knotweed

(*Polygonum polystachyum*) Not usually confused with other knotweeds, it is recognized by its long slender leaves. Grows to about 6 feet in height. Main stems are erect with twigs zigzagging slightly from node to node. Leaves are leathery, 5 to 12 inches in length with sharply pointed tips and slightly heart shaped to tapered bases. Showy white to pinkish fragrant flower clusters are borne at the tips of branches.