

Invasive plants

Reason	Certain types of plant are known to be invasive and can cause harm to the environment if they are accidentally or deliberately allowed to spread. If you can recognise the plant, and know what actions to take, this will help to prevent future problems.
Outline	This talk covers types of invasive plant and how you can help to control them.



Giant hogweed



Japanese knotweed
(image supplied by Bridget Plowright)



Himalayan balsam



Japanese knotweed in flower



If you find invasive plants in your work area, stop and report it to your supervisor.

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Examples of invasive plant

1. **Giant hogweed** spreads and, by eroding the soil, can endanger the survival of native plants and be a danger to grazing animals. It contains large amounts of poisonous sap that, if exposed to sunlight, can harm humans when it comes into contact with the skin. Eye contact can cause temporary blindness.
2. **Himalayan balsam** thrives by casting off hundreds of seed pods in the autumn. When the seed pods burst, seeds can spread over 7 m. It dominates habitats and shades native plants from sunlight.
3. **Japanese knotweed** grows rapidly (about 20 mm per day) and the root system is likely to extend by many metres and up to a depth of 2 m. It can grow through foundations, walls, roads and drainage pipework.

Control measures

1. Check the area before starting work and look for signs of any invasive plants.
2. If you find invasive plants within your work area, stop, move away and report it to your supervisor.
3. Seek medical advice from your first aider if you come into contact with the sap of giant hogweed.
4. Follow site guidance when working near to invasive plants to prevent them spreading or harming the environment or wildlife.

Precautions

1. Do not enter areas identified as containing invasive plants.
2. Do not excavate materials that may contain seeds or material from invasive plants without the appropriate control measures in place.
3. Do not stockpile material, especially within 10 m of a watercourse.
4. Do not drive vehicles through invasive plants, as this can cause them to spread.
5. Do not store excavated material suspected of containing invasive plants directly on the ground. If storage is unavoidable, use an impermeable surface.
6. Wear suitable protective clothing and use appropriate equipment if you need to come into contact with giant hogweed.



Why are invasive plants a problem in the UK?

How should giant hogweed be handled (what personal protective equipment (PPE) is required)?

Why is it important not to double-handle invasive plants?

What should you do if you get giant hogweed sap on your skin or in your eye?



Now inform your workers of the company provision for identification and prevention of spreading invasive plants.