

AMGA Master Gardener FAQ



Part 1: Client Question(s):

I have this bamboo plant in my yard that was there when I bought the house. It was sort of nice and grew despite the conditions. It is spreading all over the place. I have decided that I want to get rid of it. Here is a photo, it's not mine but better than any I tried to take. [Photo Credits](#)



Clarifying Questions Asked of the Client and their Response

Site & Growth Habit

- Is the plant forming a dense colony rather than single scattered shoots? **Yes**
- Are new stems emerging from the ground like upright spears in spring? **Yes**
- Does the patch expand outward each year into nearby soil, gravel, or lawn? **Yes**
- Is it growing in disturbed areas—shorelines, driveways, ditches, or along foundations? **Yes**

Stems

- Are the stems hollow and jointed, resembling bamboo? **Yes**
- Do you see distinct swollen nodes with papery sheaths? **Yes**
- Are mature stems green with purple/red flecking? **Yes**
- Do the shoots snap cleanly and reveal a tube-like interior? **Yes**

Leaves

- Are the leaves broad (10–15 cm), heart- to shovel-shaped with a flat base? **Yes**
- Do leaf edges appear smooth, not serrated? **Yes**
- Are the leaves arranged alternately along the stem in a zig-zag pattern? **Yes**
- Is the underside a lighter matte green without hairs? **Yes**

Roots & Rhizomes (only if safe to view exposed soil)

- Are there thick orange-brown rhizomes beneath the surface? **Yes**
- Do small root fragments seem capable of producing new shoots? **Not sure....**

Flowers

- In mid/late summer, are there creamy-white, plume-like flower clusters? **Yes**
- Are the flowers smaller and less showy than those of goat's beard or astilbe? **Not sure....**

Seasonal Clues

- **Spring:** reddish asparagus-like tips? Yes
- **Summer:** rapid vertical growth up to 2–3 m? Yes
- **Fall:** leaves yellowing while stems stay firm? Yes
- **Winter:** persistent brittle brown “bamboo” skeletons? Yes

Part 2: Identification and Response:

- **Identification** – not bamboo.... It is likely **Japanese Knotweed**. See information links at the bottom of this document.

Part 3: Management & Recommendations

1. Understand What Doesn't Work

- Digging or rototilling usually **makes the problem worse** by chopping rhizomes.
- Covering for a single season rarely kills established patches.
- Throwing cut stems in compost or yard waste spreads the plant to new sites.

2. Mechanical Control (Most Home Situations)

Repeated cutting is the safest first approach:

- Cut stems to ground level **every 2–3 weeks** from May to September.
- Remove all material from site in heavy garbage bags and send to landfill if permitted locally.
- The goal is to exhaust root reserves by preventing photosynthesis.

For small, young infestations, 2–3 seasons of diligent cutting can markedly reduce vigor.

3. Smothering – Only After Cutting Down

- Use thick geotextile or 6–8 mil black plastic extending **2 m beyond** the patch.
- Weight edges with rocks or lumber.
- Expect to keep the cover in place **3–5 years**, inspecting for escapes.

4. Chemical Options

Many gardeners eventually consider herbicide because knotweed often rebounds. If used:

- Apply **glyphosate** in **late summer/early fall** when the plant is moving energy to roots.
- The most effective method is stem injection or painting cut stems rather than broadcast spraying.
- Follow provincial regulations and label directions exactly; protect nearby water.

Community groups should involve licensed applicators.

5. Disposal & Biosecurity

- Never move soil from an infested area.
- Clean tools and footwear after working in the patch.
- Monitor downstream ditches and neighbours for new shoots.

6. Re-Planting the Area

After suppression, choose tough competitors: willow, red-osier dogwood, spruce, or dense native meadow mixes. Continue to watch—sunny waterfront sites like yours are especially vulnerable to re-establishment.

Part 4: Invasive Species Councils

Japanese knotweed is a significant concern due to its aggressive growth, which can damage infrastructure and outcompete native species.

- If you think you have identified Japanese knotweed, you can report your sighting to your provincial invasive species council:
 - **New Brunswick:** [New Brunswick Invasive Species Council](#)
 - **Nova Scotia:** [Nova Scotia Invasive Species Council](#)
 - **Prince Edward Island:** [PEI Invasive Species Council](#)
- Always consult with a professional before attempting removal, as improper handling of plant fragments can inadvertently cause the plant to spread further.

Part 5: References

Penn State Extension. (2020). *Japanese Knotweed control*. Retrieved from <https://extension.psu.edu/japanese-knotweed>. extension.psu.edu

Ontario Invasive Plant Council. (2025). *Japanese Knotweed Technical Bulletin & Best Management Practices*. [Ontario Invasive Plant Council](#)

Missouri Department of Conservation. (n.d.). *Japanese knotweed control*. mdc.mo.gov