

Removing invasive plants from your land

Please remember that you must not trespass or remove plants from land that does not belong to you without the consent of the landowner.

Before attempting to remove invasive plants consider how you will dispose of the cleared plants. Many invasions in the countryside start as a result of people disposing of unwanted plant matter. Make sure you don't add to the problem. If you do not dispose of plants appropriately, you may be committing an offence. It is also an offence to cause around 50 non-native plants to grow in the wild. [Read the *Invasive plants and the law* pdf for more information.](#)

Some invasive species, including Japanese knotweed, are controlled waste and must be disposed of properly at registered sites. Contact the Environment Agency for more information about disposing of controlled waste: www.environment-agency.gov.uk / tel: 08708 506 506

When removing invasive plants by hand, always wear gloves. For most species, pulling by hand on a regular and ongoing basis is the most environmentally friendly approach. For Japanese knotweed, however, use of herbicides may be necessary.

Herbicides

Chemicals can be an effective means of controlling invasive plants but Plantlife recommends manual alternatives whenever possible. Before deciding to use a herbicide, we advise you to:

- Seek advice on the most appropriate herbicide to use. Note that some chemicals kill all vegetation they contact.
- Only use domestic proprietary brands of herbicide (certain herbicides should only be handled by a licensed professional).
- Always take proper precautions and read the product label beforehand.
- Be aware of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) 1988 regulations.
- Consult the Environment Agency in England and Wales and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency in Scotland if you intend to use herbicide in or around a waterbody or watercourse.

Weil's Disease

When working in or by ponds, always take special care. Make sure the depth of the pond will not make work hazardous. Weil's Disease, although uncommon, can be caught through contact with contaminated water in canals and non-flowing watercourses. The following precautionary steps will help avoidance:

- Ensure all minor cuts, abrasions, sores etc are covered up with waterproof plasters.
- Wear waterproof gloves.
- Take care to avoid dirty water entering eyes, nose or mouth.
- Maintain normal standards of hygiene and always wash hands thoroughly before drinking, eating or smoking.

New Zealand pigmyweed *Crassula helmsii*: Early and regular treatment is highly recommended. In small ponds, regular pulling out of the plant may be an effective control technique. New Zealand pigmyweed does seem to be less vigorous in ponds with plants that provide some shade, like the native bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata* for example. Shading by covering with black polythene for at least three months during the growing season can also be effective, although this will have adverse effects on other species in the pond. While herbicides can be used to help control this plant, they should only be used in winter months when all other plants have died back. However, any use of herbicide in ponds will cause damage to other species.

Floating pennywort *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*: Floating pennywort is difficult to control due to its rapid growth rates (up to 20cm per day!) and its ability to re-grow from a small fragment. Regular cutting from May-October will prevent complete dominance and so help manage this plant. Cut material needs to be removed from the water immediately. Hand pulling (or spot chemical treatment) should follow cutting to reduce re-growth. Pulling is likely to work best on small infestations rather than larger areas. Chemical treatment should only be used at the end of the growing season when all other plants have died back.

Parrot's-feather *Myriophyllum aquaticum*: Regular cutting (at least every 6-9 weeks during the growing season - cut more frequently if necessary) will help to weaken the plant. In your garden pond you can thin using a rake. Cut material must be removed from the water as soon as possible and all fragments need to be removed to prevent regrowth (or spread downstream if you are clearing an area of river). Careful pulling out of stems by hand after cutting will help eradicate it.

Water fern *Azolla filiculoides*: The easiest way to ensure you get all of the plant matter out of your pond is to scoop it up with a net. You can use a hose to force Water Fern to side of your pond, which should make it easier to scoop up. The RHS suggest that fountains may help to reduce infestations by disturbing the water surface. In larger ponds and lakes, a floating boom can be used to sweep the water surface. Complete control is very difficult and so repeated clearance will be necessary. It is important to attempt control before the spores are released (at the beginning of winter, or once dense mats have formed). If spores have already been released then be extra vigilant the following year to catch reinfestation early.

Invasive water primroses *Ludwigia* species: Early removal is essential if these plants are to be controlled. Try to remove all plant fragments and roots, otherwise reinfestation may occur. Regular clearing may be required to deal with regrowth.

Indian balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*: Indian balsam needs dealing with before it sets seed. If control is undertaken early enough to prevent flowering (and if this is achieved before seed has set) then eradication is possible in two or three years. We recommend that the plants, which are shallow-rooted, should be pulled out and disposed of by burning appropriately or composting carefully (as long as no seeds are present). If this is done on a regular basis and the plant is not allowed to set seed, it will eventually die out. Regular strimming of larger areas is also an option, as long as it is done often enough to prevent flowering.

Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica* There is no quick solution for the eradication of Japanese knotweed. Effective control can be achieved if Japanese Knotweed is cut or sprayed in early summer, and then sprayed again in late summer, just before the winter dieback. A systemic weedkiller for dicotyledons should be used. It will take about three years until complete dieback and destruction of the rhizome has been achieved. Digging up Japanese knotweed can be attempted, but this must be done very carefully to avoid spreading stem fragments and increasing the problem. New plants can grow from a piece of rhizome the size of a little finger and the crown, located at the base of the stem will also produce new plants. The digging should be carried out by excavating the areas immediately surrounding the Japanese Knotweed, ideally to a depth of 3m and to a surrounding area of 5m. However if this is impractical another chemical-free option is to put a membranous liner over the Japanese Knotweed and re-plant on top of it, although a depth of at least 1 metre of soil is required.

Japanese knotweed is classified as controlled waste and must be properly disposed of. It should never be composted but be burnt on site. If it has to be removed from site, follow Environment Agency guidelines and ensure very careful removal from the site in sealed bags to take to a licensed landfill site. Always inform the waste site manager that the material contains Japanese knotweed.

Whilst Plantlife International has made all reasonable efforts to include accurate and up-to-date information, it is provided without warranty, express or implied. Plantlife International assumes no liability or responsibility for any errors or omissions in the content.