

Justification Report

for inclusion of Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) in Norfolk County's Clean Yard By-law



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Introduction:

Norfolk County is currently proposing revisions to the current Clean Yard By-law (By-law 2005-127). As part of the revision, Forestry staff are recommending the inclusion of Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) as a plant to be regulated through the by-law. The Clean Yard By-law currently requires private landowners to keep their properties free of refuse, debris, long grass or noxious weeds (as defined by the *Weed Control Act*, RSO 1990, as amended). The following report is intended to provide support as to why Norfolk County should also regulate Japanese Knotweed on private lands within Norfolk County.

Description of Japanese Knotweed:

Japanese Knotweed is an extremely invasive plant that, when established, can be very difficult to eradicate. It was introduced into North America the 1800's through the horticulture industry, and was planted as an ornamental feature in landscaping and also used for erosion control.

The plant resembles bamboo, being hollow with visible nodes between branches. The stem is green with purple colouring at the nodes and purple blotches along the main stem. It has heart-shaped leaves with smooth leaf margins.

Japanese knotweed can become established in a wide-range of habitat types, including woodlands, roadsides, riparian and wetland areas, and dry sandy sites.

Japanese Knotweed forms dense patches with rhizomes that are able to sprout new growth several meters away from visible above ground growth. The reproduction of the plant is accomplished primarily via rhizomes in the root system, and reproduction via seed is relatively rare. The root system can be very robust reaching depths of over a meter, which is what makes the plant so difficult to control. The movement of soil contaminated with pieces of root from the plant is the primary mechanism that enables this plant to spread from one location to another, which it has done quite successfully since its introduction to North America.

Threats of Japanese Knotweed:

In addition to displacing native vegetation and having a negative impact on native biodiversity, the plant can also create maintenance issues along roads, trails and drains, and cause damage to infrastructure. Japanese knotweed has been shown to grow through asphalt and concrete and spread from one side of a road way to the other via the underground root system. Where it becomes established along watercourses, parts of the root system may break off and become established downstream, allowing the plant to spread rapidly. It has been shown to have negative impacts to property values where it is established in parts of the United Kingdom and British Columbia.

Existing Regulations of Japanese Knotweed:

Japanese knotweed is identified in the top 100 invasive species worldwide according to the Global Invasive Species Database (developed by the Invasive Species Specialist Group).

Japanese Knotweed is currently regulated through Ontario's *Invasive Species Act*, S.O. 2015, where it is designated as a "Restricted" invasive species. This designation makes it illegal to import, deposit, release, breed/grow, buy, sell, lease or trade Japanese Knotweed.

Japanese knotweed is not currently recognized as a noxious weed pursuant to Ontario's *Weed Control Act*. It is, however, listed as a noxious weed in Alberta and British Columbia on their provincial noxious weed lists.

Although current provincial regulations in Ontario help restrict the introduction of Japanese knotweed into the province and has eliminated production of the plant domestically, it does very little to compel landowners with Japanese knotweed existing on their property to eradicate it.

Japanese Knotweed in Norfolk County:

Norfolk County is currently undertaking control of Japanese knotweed where it has been identified on County owned lands. Most infestations of Japanese knotweed on County owned lands are related to roadside populations. In many of these instances Japanese knotweed is also established on adjacent private lands.

There are approximately 40 different sites currently being controlled or monitored by Norfolk County. Each "patch" of Japanese Knotweed is counted as a separate site, so although there are 40 different sites, some sites are in close proximity to each other. With that said, Japanese knotweed is confirmed to be in the towns of Simcoe, Port Dover, Delhi, and along rural roadsides in the former townships of Charlotteville, Woodhouse, Windham, and North Walsingham.

Staff have also been made aware of other locations where Japanese knotweed exists on private land, where it does not impact County owned land but has potential to impact adjacent privately owned properties.

Conclusion:

Japanese knotweed is established in Norfolk County, on both private and County owned land. It is likely, if not controlled, Japanese knotweed will continue to spread and create nuisance and maintenance issues for private landowners and the County. Where Norfolk County is controlling Japanese knotweed on its own land, efforts have now stalled due to the infestation existing on adjacent private lands allowing the infestation to persist on County land as well.

Norfolk County will be reaching out to landowners where Japanese knotweed is known to exist, particularly where it is adjacent to a site being controlled by Norfolk County. Forestry staff feel it would be beneficial to regulate Japanese knotweed through Norfolk County's Clean Yard By-law so that the impacts of Japanese knotweed can be addressed, and the spread of Japanese knotweed can be reduced and ideally eliminated.

Forestry staff are able to provide assistance to By-law staff in the identification of Japanese knotweed, and are able to provide technical guidance to landowners who are dealing with an infestation. It is anticipated that regulating Japanese knotweed will not result in a significant amount of increased effort or staff time, rather, the concern is that by not regulating Japanese knotweed the County will continue to deal with problem infestations and landowners may be subject to the similar issues if Japanese knotweed exists adjacent to their property.

The regulation of Japanese knotweed through the Clean Yard By-law will provide the County and landowners seeking relief from the impacts of Japanese knotweed an opportunity to address existing infestations through enforcement measures. It also provides an opportunity to educate the general public about Japanese knotweed and demonstrates the County's desire to prevent damages caused by Japanese knotweed.



Figure 1. Distribution of Japanese knotweed on Norfolk County owned lands.

Additional information:

https://www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/OIPC_BMP_JapaneseKnotweed.pdf

<http://www.invadingspecies.com/invaders/plants/japanese-knotweed/>

<https://www.macleans.ca/society/science/the-plant-thats-eating-b-c/>