Japanese Knotweed

Why is it so important to eradicate Japanese Knotweed? This monster-spreader was introduced from East Asia in the late 1800s as an ornamental and to stabilize streambanks. Knotweed is a highly successful invader of wetlands, stream corridors, forest edges, and drainage ditches across the country. It is listed by the World Conservation Union as one of the world's worst invasive species. It is now considered one of the worst invasive exotics in parts of the eastern United States.

Quickly growing up to 11 feet tall, knotweed can spread horizontally via an extensive network of underground rhizomes, along which many shoots will sprout. The invasive root system and strong growth can damage concrete foundations, buildings, flood defenses, roads, paving, retaining walls and architectural sites. It can also reduce the capacity of channels in flood defenses to carry water.

Japanese Knotweed infestations result in decreased biodiversity in both plant and animal communities and degraded water quality. The dense, low canopy formed by a thicket of tangled stems and large leaves creates a monoculture, excluding nearly all other vegetation. In comparison to native streamside vegetation, Japanese Knotweed provides poor erosion control, and its presence gradually degrades aquatic habitat.

Once established, this invasive is VERY hard to get rid of. Best to not let it get established in the first place. But once it has, it requires a two-step process that needs to be repeated for at least two years. You'll find instructions here:

DO NOT compost it!

Japanese Knotweed is classified as HIGH invasive risk on the Virginia Invasive Species Plant List from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. More information:

https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/invspinfo

https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/document/nh-invasive-plant-list-2014.pdf

https://extension.psu.edu/japanese-knotweed

https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/sites/parks/files/assets/documents/naturalcultural/non-native-invasive-id-control-booklet.pdf

Figure 1: Japanese knotweed has triangular leaves

Figure 2: Japanese knotweed stem detail

Figure 3: Japanese knotweed in bloom

Figure 4: Japanese knotweed overtakes its environment

Figure 5: Japanese knotweed stems have a purplish tinge

Figure 6: Japanese knotweed shoots in spring