

Knotweed warning as plant reappears

► SWANSEA

Nino Williams

@ninominoli • 01792 545552
nino.williams@swwmedia.co.uk

KNOTWEED experts have warned of reports the pest plant is shooting up early in South Wales this year, due to one of the mildest and wettest winters on record.

Japanese knotweed is described by the Environment Agency as “indisputably the UK’s most aggressive and destructive invasive plant”, and mortgage lenders often refuse to lend on affected properties.

Removal specialist Environet say

they have found many properties recently with the plants red buds emerging ready to grow into green leaves.

Nic Seal, managing director of Environet said: “When the knotweed is hibernating over winter it’s out of sight and out of mind, but soon knotweed will start to grow again at a spectacular rate. All major lenders recognise the damage it can cause to property, and tend to refuse a mortgage on affected properties.”

Tackling Japanese knotweed in Wales is estimated to cost almost £9m every year.

Swansea has long been considered a knotweed hotspot, and Swansea

University’s College of Science has been conducting one of the largest-ever field trials to test ways of combating the plant.

A new law introduced last year now means homeowners who allow invasive plants such as Japanese Knotweed to spread unchecked face a hefty fine and an ASBO. They can be fined up to £2,500 under the new rules of The Anti-Social Behaviour Crime & Policing Act 2014, which now classes failing to control highly invasive plants as “anti-social behaviour”. The fines for businesses can be as high as £20,000.

And last year, the owner of a property on Carmarthen Road faced losing half its value because of knotweed affecting

the property. Instead of an expected £80,000 price tag for the property, the presence of knotweed on an adjacent piece of land had seen it valued at £45,000, until it was treated by Environet.

Mr Seal added: “There is now a legal duty on them to disclose whether the property is affected by Japanese knotweed. Unfortunately there are some dishonest, desperate people around who don’t disclose it, leaving the unsuspecting buying with the horrors of owning an infested property. Some knotweed victims decide to sue their seller, their surveyor or solicitor.

“But is now Japanese Knotweed indemnity insurance available.”