

# Beacon

Invasive Plant Intelligence

Authored by leading  
invasive plant  
experts

**Environet**



## The invasive plants posing the **greatest threat to property**

**When it comes to property, certain invasive plants are more problematic than others. We highlight the main ones to watch out for, the risks they can pose and explain how best to treat them.**

All invasive plants can cause issues for landowners, developers and homeowners/buyers, but certain species pose a far greater risk to property than others, causing serious damage to buildings and landscaping. Increasingly, they can also prompt legal disputes when plants spread to neighbouring properties or when homes are bought and sold.

During the winter months it can be harder to spot invasive plants, but early identification and specialist know-how are critical to the successful remediation of all invasives. Read on to find how to identify the most troublesome species and what can be done about them.



Removing an invasive plant infestation which had completely taken over a home in Hampshire



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# Rogues' Gallery

## The worst offenders



### Japanese knotweed

The UK's most invasive plant, knotweed spreads rapidly via its powerful rhizome system and is very difficult to remove without professional help. It damages driveways, paths and patios, outbuildings and homes when left unchecked for long periods, and mortgage lenders won't lend without evidence of a professional treatment plan and guarantee. It can cause legal disputes between neighbours when allowed to spread.



**Treatment:** Excavation for immediate removal or herbicide treatment during the growing season with monitoring visits. An Insurance-backed guarantee is usually required to enable the successful sale of an affected property.

### Bamboo

A very common invasive plant, popular among homeowners for privacy and screening, that can spread quickly when planted directly into the ground. Running varieties are the most troublesome, sending long lateral runners travelling 30 ft or more to emerge in new locations. It can cause extensive damage to homes and gardens and often prompts legal disputes between neighbours when allowed to spread across boundaries



**Treatment:** Excavation to remove the root balls and all rhizome from the ground. Any regrowth is removed or where necessary, herbicide treated during monitoring visits. Containment may also work in certain situations.

### Horsetail

A deep-rooted perennial plant that begins to grow in February or March and spreads rapidly via its underground rhizome system and by releasing spores in early spring. Forming dense carpets of foliage, it can cause extensive damage to hard landscaping, paths, patios and driveways.



**Treatment:** Physical excavation of the root system, which can extend 2m in depth. Herbicide treatment is made more difficult by the plant's waxy coating, so a careful balance of chemicals is needed to maximise the effectiveness of the treatment.

### Buddleia

A long-time favourite with gardeners, Buddleia (otherwise known as butterfly bush) spreads by seed to emerge in gutters, on chimneys, in walls and from cracks in pavements and pathways. It causes damage to buildings and structures due to its strong woody stems and rapidly expanding root system.



**Treatment:** Relatively easy to treat, Buddleia often requires just one or two herbicide applications in mid-summer with a monitoring visit the following year. It can also be excavated, with infested soils sent for sterilisation and reuse.



Japanese knotweed rhizome discovered underground at a residential property

## The legislative framework

All landowners, whether residential or commercial, have a duty to manage invasive non-native species (INNS) on their land in accordance with the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 and the Invasive Alien Species Order 2019. But not every invasive plant is legislated against, despite the fact that most can cause damage of some kind, whether it's to the environment, property or sometimes even health.

Japanese knotweed poses a threat to our native habitats and is therefore listed on the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. While some people are surprised to learn it isn't illegal to have knotweed growing on their land and it's not a notifiable weed, meaning local authorities don't need to be alerted to its presence, there is legislation that regulates and controls the planting and disposal of knotweed.



Japanese knotweed encroachment

Those who allow it to encroach to a neighbouring property or knowingly sell a property with knotweed without declaring its presence, could face expensive civil claims. This includes developers who have failed to clear land of knotweed effectively and neglected to disclose it to new home buyers.

[environetuk.com](http://environetuk.com)

Bamboo, however, can cause just as much damage as Japanese knotweed if left to its own devices over a relatively short period of time, yet is still freely sold in plant nurseries and garden centres across the UK with little in the way of warnings regarding its invasive nature.



Bamboo infiltrating a home

**Nic Seal, Founder and MD of Environet UK, told the Daily Telegraph:**

**"Sellers are not legally required to disclose the presence of bamboo on a property, unlike in cases of Japanese knotweed, leaving buyers vulnerable to costly repair bills or even legal claims from neighbours.**

**There's no regulation to protect homebuyers, so they have no legal recourse against the seller if bamboo starts to cause a problem after they move in."**

**Read the full article [here](#)**

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## Other plants to be aware of

**Giant Hogweed**, which looks similar to overgrown cow parsley, is increasingly prevalent in the UK, particularly along waterways where it spreads successfully via seed to quickly colonise new locations. While posing little threat to property, it is a highly toxic plant that can damage human and animal health due to its sap which contains furocoumarin, a chemical that causes painful burns to the skin.



**Himalayan balsam**, an annual plant that grows very rapidly up to 2.5 metres tall, has a habit of outcompeting native plants and smothering vegetation. Again, this invasive plant usually proliferates along water courses. But while it causes environmental damage through the erosion of riverbanks, it poses minimal threat to property.

### Free ID service

We've been dealing with invasive plants for over 25 years, so we're well placed to help identify any plants of concern and advise you or your clients on the best course of action. We offer a free ID service – just email a photo to [expert@environetuk.com](mailto:expert@environetuk.com) and we'll confirm whether it's knotweed at no charge.

[Japanese knotweed surveys](#)



### JustCheck™ Reports

We provide JustCheck™ surveys in cases where a customer is unsure whether or not a property is affected by knotweed and wants to be certain before completing the TA6 form, which, if answered incorrectly, could leave them exposed to a legal case in the future.

Our expert surveyors will check the property for any sign of knotweed, including within 3m of the boundary, and provide a 5-year warranty to cover the cost of treatment in the unlikely event it should later appear.

Authored by experts, Beacon is a series of information papers providing insights into the removal and treatment of invasive plants in the UK.

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