



Environet
Invasive Plant Specialists



30 years of invasive plant industry evolution from the front line

Few environmental issues have had such a profound impact on residential property transactions as Japanese knotweed. Over the past three decades, what was once regarded as a niche environmental nuisance has evolved into a mainstream property risk influencing mortgage lending, legal disclosure, surveying standards, buyer behaviour and even neighbourly relations.



As Environet marks its 30th year in business this month, we reflect on the role we have played in that transformation, helping surveyors, lenders, conveyancers and developers navigate the rapidly evolving landscape around invasive plants since the late 1990s.

From the early days of limited awareness and crude excavation methods, to today's data-led, evidence-based risk management framework, we explore the evolution of the invasive plant sector and consider what the next decade may hold for property professionals navigating the risks around invasive plants.

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1990s: The emergence of knotweed as a property concern

Although Japanese knotweed was added to the Wildlife and Countryside Act in 1981, it remained for many years largely an environmental issue on the very periphery of the property market. Awareness among homeowners was low, treatment was poorly understood and the problem rarely popped up during residential transactions.

That began to change during the late 1990s and early 2000s as surveyors, lenders and insurers became increasingly aware of the damage the plant could cause to buildings and hard surfaces – and how difficult it was to deal with.

Our Founder Nic was one of a handful of emerging experts in the UK at the time who began to raise awareness of the potential impacts and started to build expertise in what was then a highly niche field.



RICS and the TA6: Two key moments that catapulted knotweed into the mainstream

As awareness of the plant grew, mortgage lenders became increasingly unwilling to lend on affected properties because they had no objective way to quantify the risk. Without a standardised framework, the mere presence of knotweed, even on a neighbouring property, could render a home effectively unmortgageable. As the media highlighted horror stories, homeowners found it almost impossible to sell properties that were even slightly blighted and the situation became untenable.

The publication of formal RICS guidance in 2012 marked a major turning point, introducing a standardised framework for assessing knotweed risk which quickly became embedded within property transactions, with lenders increasingly requiring specialist surveys, treatment plans and insurance-backed guarantees before approving loans. A year later, in 2013, knotweed was added to the Law Society's TA6 Property Information Form, legally requiring sellers to disclose whether a property was affected.

Japanese knotweed

Note: Please see the [Explanatory Notes for Sellers and Buyers](#) for further information about Japanese knotweed.

23.3 Is the property, or an area adjacent to or abutting the boundary, affected by Japanese knotweed?

If Yes, please state whether there is a Japanese knotweed management and treatment plan in place and supply a copy with any insurance cover linked to the plan.

Radon

Note: Radon is a naturally occurring inert radioactive gas found in the ground. Some parts of England and Wales are more adversely affected by it than others. Remedial action is advised for properties with a test result above the 'recommended action level'. Further information about Radon can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/radon>

23.4 Has a Radon test been carried out on the property?

If Yes:

(a) please supply a copy of the report

Together, the RICS guidance and the TA6 question fundamentally changed the approach to knotweed in the UK, transforming it from a peripheral issue into one that both surveyors and sellers were required to actively consider and declare.

For specialist contractors such as Environet, the introduction of clearer professional standards also marked a significant shift in expectations around reporting, treatment methodologies, guarantees and lender reassurance. The sector became increasingly evidence-led, with property professionals demanding greater transparency, consistency and accountability from invasive weed specialists.

The evolution of knotweed treatment

Knotweed remediation methods have evolved significantly over the past 30 years. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, excavation and landfill disposal (commonly known as 'dig and dump') was widely regarded as the default solution, despite the enormous financial and environmental costs involved.

Over time, however, specialists including Environet helped pioneer more sustainable and cost-effective remediation approaches focused on on-site management, containment and soil recovery.



In 2008, Environet designed and developed the Xtract™ machine, enabling knotweed rhizome to be separated from excavated soil so that cleaned soil could be safely re-used on site, drastically reducing waste sent to landfill. The shift reflected broader changes within the sector towards more sustainable remediation methods and a deeper knowledge of the plant's biology.



Greater understanding of herbicide efficacy has also led to a clearer distinction between 'control' and 'eradication'.

Research demonstrated that while herbicide treatment can be highly effective in suppressing above-ground growth, it does not always fully eliminate the plant's extensive rhizome system, which may instead enter a prolonged dormant state.

Having managed thousands of invasive plant cases across the UK over the last three decades, Environet's own data provides a useful snapshot of changing consumer priorities and transaction pressures. A clear trend towards excavating knotweed rather than controlling it demonstrates the wider impact of the plant, with homeowners seeking to preserve property values, make homes easier to sell and remove the risk of it spreading to neighbouring land.

In 2015, just 26% of Environet customers opted for excavation, with the majority choosing herbicide treatment programmes. By 2025, that split had shifted to almost half and half, with 51% opting for excavation and 49% choosing herbicide control.

"Over the past 30 years, Japanese knotweed has evolved from a little understood environmental problem to a catastrophic threat, and back down again to recognised but manageable risk."

"The industry today is for more sophisticated, proportionate and data-driven than it was even a decade ago and that's led to consumers also becoming more pragmatic."

Emily Grant, Director, Environet

Changing consumer attitudes

Public attitudes towards Japanese knotweed have changed dramatically over the past three decades. During the 2000s and 2010s, horror stories portraying the plant as capable of causing homes to collapse or become worthless played a major role in shaping perceptions.

With public awareness now at 77%, according to our latest research with YouGov, today there is a much better understanding of the problem which has led the public to take a more sensible and nuanced approach.



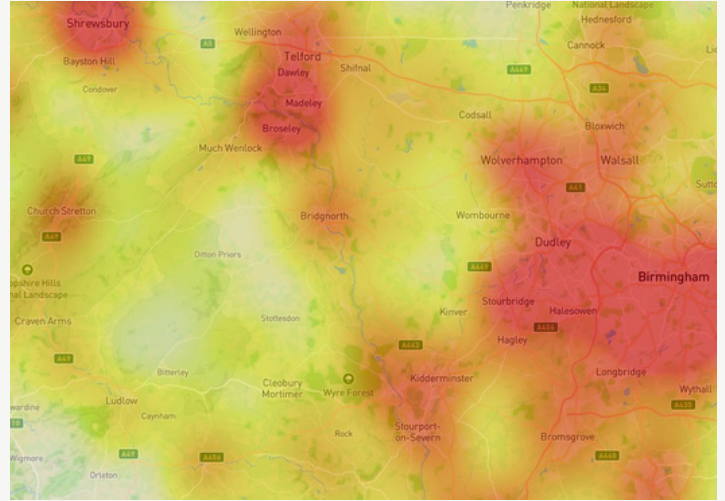
While concern remains high, and almost a third of buyers (32%) would still not buy a property with knotweed under any circumstance, they have become increasingly aware that professionally managed infestations should not necessarily prevent mortgage lenders from providing a loan, or cause a purchase to collapse – although some renegotiation of the price is often expected to reflect the ongoing risk and 'knotweed stigma'.

Invasive plants are now more likely to be viewed as one element within a wider property risk landscape which also includes factors such as flooding, subsidence and contamination.

The growing role of tech and data

Technology and data have further changed how risk is identified, assessed and managed throughout the property development and transaction process.

Today, digital site mapping, heatmap databases, AI identification and even drone surveys have improved the ability to track infestations and identify risk hotspots, giving surveyors, conveyancers and lenders a far more detailed and accurate picture.



Desktop assessment tools such as KnotSure™ can instantly assess the risk to a specific property before committing to an on-site survey, allowing buyers and professionals to make evidence-based judgement calls much earlier in the transaction process.

As datasets have grown and understanding of the plant has improved, the industry has moved away from treating every incidence as a major threat, towards assessing actual risk based on extent, location and proximity. The revised RICS guidance introduced in 2022 reflects this broader shift, moving away from rigid rules towards more proportional, evidence-based decision making.

What's coming next?

The next phase in the evolution of invasive plant treatment, removal and impact will be shaped by even greater use of technology and data, helping buyers, surveyors and lenders identify potential issues earlier than ever before. If a version of Home Information Packs makes a return, requiring more material information about a property to be provided up front, that could also help increase transparency on knotweed issues during the marketing phase. At the same time, growing pressure around sustainability and biodiversity is likely to place greater emphasis on environmentally responsible remediation methods and further reduce the waste associated with excavation and disposal.

Perhaps most significantly, we expect the market-based system that has evolved to deal with knotweed very effectively, primarily via lender requirements, the surveying framework and seller disclosures, to widen to incorporate other invasive plants such as bamboo. The success of the knotweed framework has shown that when professional standards, lender requirements and market incentives align, even highly problematic invasive plants can be managed effectively without direct government intervention.

Conclusion

Thirty years after Environet was founded, the invasive plant sector has evolved from a loosely understood, niche issue into a sophisticated specialist discipline embedded within the UK property market - and this evolution is far from over.

Authored by experts, Beacon is a series of quarterly information papers providing insights into the removal and treatment of invasive plants in the UK. Sign up to receive future Beacon articles [here](#).



Further information



About the author



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Emily has 20 years of Environmental consultancy experience, with the last decade focused entirely on invasive plants. As Director of Operations, she oversees governance and compliance, and also runs the Sales & Marketing department.

As a recognised expert in invasive plants, Emily hosts numerous seminars and webinars, sharing knowledge with industry professionals and clients.



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