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Knotweed Removal : Challenges and Hazards by Sedgwick Sadik

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With Knotweed dispersion being considered illegal and liable for prosecution under both criminal and civil laws, the proper eradication and control of this invasive bio-pest has become top priority for property owners, sellers, buyers, the realty industry, ecologists, environmentalists, city councils and the building industry.

Some of the challenges in eradication/control of Japanese Knotweed are:

Working with a strategy: Doing a proper survey before starting out is a good place to begin. A professional surveyor can give you proper advice about the extent of infestation not only in your own property, but also in the neighboring areas. Assess the best method for your property and decide whether to use one or a combination of strategies like herbicides, dig-and-dump, cell-burial, root-barriers and alternative organic herbicides like vinegar/sea-water spray. Plan what you will do with the infected soil, since dumping infected soil in conventional landfills or garden-waste centers is illegal. Find the nearest licensed dumping site for Knotweed-infested soil, cuttings and other material that may have been used.

Follow best practices: The county's Environment Agency has a Code of Practice which can be downloaded from their website. You will have to take their permission to use chemical herbicides near water-bodies or other high-risk areas. If you're spraying, make sure that other plants are suitably protected and that neighboring property owners are kept informed. Use the appropriate safety-clothing, masks and gloves while spraying and keep children and pregnant women out of the area.

Physical Removal: can be effective in smaller plots and recent invasions. Learn to recognize Knotweed and begin the eradication immediately if you spot the plant. Knotweed thrives in sunny, moist conditions and is spread through infected soil. It is not known to infect forested areas. Deprived of sunlight, the plant-growth can be curbed. Covering with plastic tarpaulin or discarded carpeting is one way in which you can slow new growth. Hence, make sure you dispose of the rhizomes and stems and contaminated soil by bagging them safely and cleaning the garden tools you use by passing them through open flame. Digging can be counter-productive as even tiny cuts in the underlying rhizome can cause it to regenerate.

Appropriate Herbicide: The right herbicide should be used to eradicate Knotweed. In this case, Glyphosate has been found to be the correct weed-killer and it comes under several trade-names. You will have to check the label on the container before purchasing it. The best time to spray is during the early growing season, in late summer or early autumn, with efforts being continuously put to cut it back during earlier seasons. Some experts recommend injecting herbicides into the soil but this can be laborious and results are not guaranteed.

Finally, a multi-pronged strategy is the best bet in your battle against Knotweed, but ultimately, prevention is the best solution.

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