

Himalayan knotweed

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Species Description

Scientific name: *Koenigia polystachya*

AKA: *Polygonum wallichii*, *Polygonum polystachyum*, *Persicaria polystachyum*

Native to: Himalayas; India, China, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Pakistan and Myanmar

Habitat: River banks, roadsides, railway banks, waste ground and disturbed areas

Himalayan knotweed is a tall, stout perennial herb, which usually grows to 1.5m in height, but can grow up to 1.8m. It is quick growing and forms dense patches.

Leaves are lanceolate in shape and are 8-20cm long and 3-8cm wide. They have red veins, taper to a long point and also taper at the base (lower leaves are heart-shaped to flat at the base). Leaf stalk is 1-3cm in length. The underside of leaves range from hairless to densely hairy. Creeping brown-orange rhizome (roots) with pale ivory core.

White leafy flowers on long branched spikes are on the end of the stem or in the axils of leaves. Does not always produce flowers in Northern Ireland, but most likely to flower August – September.

Himalayan knotweed was introduced as an ornamental plant and has since spread across Northern Ireland. It can spread vegetatively from sections of rhizome or stem, viable seeds are rarely produced in Northern Ireland.

Quick growing, dense patches form early in the season therefore shading out and displacing native species.

Himalayan knotweed is listed on Schedule 9 of The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 and as such, it is an offence to plant or otherwise allow this species to grow in the wild.



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Key ID Features

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Lower leaves cordate (heart shaped) to truncate base

Red veins

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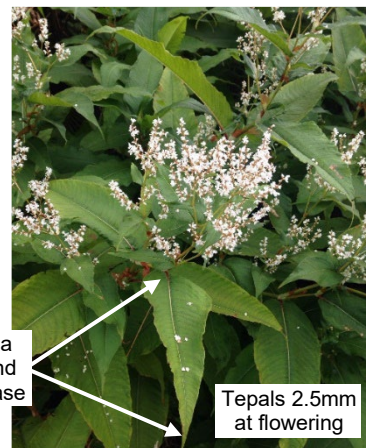
Flowers at the end of stem or at leaf axil

Short leaf petiole 1-3cm

Does not always produce flowers but most likely to occur August – September



Tapering to a long point and tapering to base



Tepals 2.5mm at flowering

© Carita Bergman, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0. <https://www.qbif.org/occurrence/1305154939>



Can grow to form dense patches

Leaves 8-20cm long and 3-8cm wide

Report any sightings via; CEDaR Online Recording - <https://www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI>, iRecord app or Invasive Species Northern Ireland website - <http://invasivespeciesni.co.uk/report-sighting>

Identification throughout the year

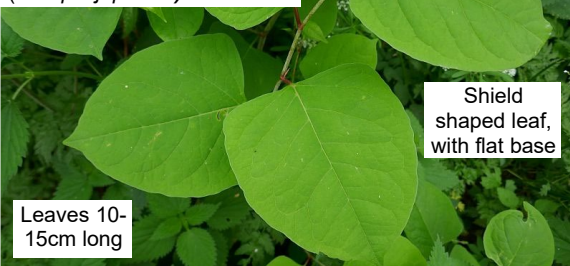
Dies back in the winter leaving brown brittle stems.

Similar Species

K. polystachya can be confused with other knotweeds

Japanese knotweed

Invasive non-native
(*Fallopia japonica*)



Shield shaped leaf, with flat base

Leaves 10-15cm long

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Flowers clustered in loose spikes at base of upper leaves



Underside of leaf has no hairs

Usually grows 2m in height

Zig-zag growth

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Giant knotweed

Invasive non-native
(*Fallopia sachalinensis*)



Usually grows 2-3m in height

Flowers are greenish white

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Leaves up to 40cm long

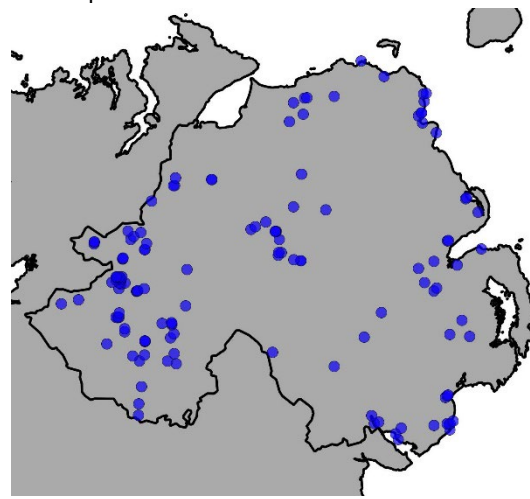
Underside of leaf is scattered with long wavy white hairs

Oval to oblong-shaped leaf, with heart shaped (cordate) base

© bruno stein. CC BY-NC 4.0. <https://www.gbif.org/occurrence/2838382885>

Distribution

Widespread across Northern Ireland



Source: NBN atlas Northern Ireland

<https://northernireland-species.nbnatlas.org/search/?q=himalayan+knotweed>
Check website for current distribution

Although not present in Northern Ireland, the invasive non-native soft knotweed (*Persicaria mollis*) is similar to *K. polystachya*. Leaves are densely hairy, cuneate (wedge) at the base and tepals are greater than 2.5mm at flowering.

Hybrid Japanese knotweed

Invasive non-native
(*Fallopia bohemica*)



Usually grows 2.5m in height

Flowers are greenish white

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Leaves 20-25cm long

Oblong shield-shaped leaf, with heart shaped base

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References and further reading:

- Booy, O., Wade, M. and Roy, H. 2015. Field Guide to Invasive Plants and Animals in Britain. Bloomsbury. London.
- CABI *Persicaria wallichii* (Himalayan knotweed) data sheet <https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/120210>

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