

Giant knotweed

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Species Description

Scientific name: *Fallopia sachalinensis*

AKA: *Polygonum sachalinensis*, *Reynoutria sachalinensis*

Native to: Japan

Habitat: River banks, roadsides, railway banks, waste ground and disturbed areas. Thrives in damp soil

Giant knotweed is a herbaceous perennial usually 2-3m in height (can grow to 5m), occasionally growing in dense thickets but it less aggressive than Japanese knotweed. Stems are bamboo like, straight, with regular nodes and have purple-red flecks.

Leaves are oval to oblong-shaped with a cordate (heart-shaped) base. They are up to 40cm long and are green, or yellow in the autumn. Underside is scattered with long wavy hairs. Leaf stalk 1-4cm. Tiny greenish-white flowers occur in grape-like clusters. Orange rhizome (roots) are generally knotty and have leathery outer layer (appearing like ginger).

Spreads vegetatively from small pieces of the plant, commonly through the movement of contaminated soil containing rhizome fragments.

Where established, giant knotweed forms dense colonies shading out and displacing native species. It can also impede water flow by obstructing streams and rivers.

Giant 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



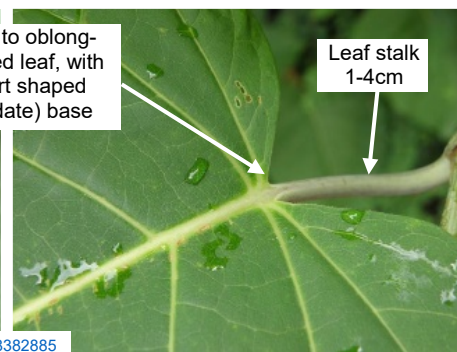
Usually grows
2-3m in height

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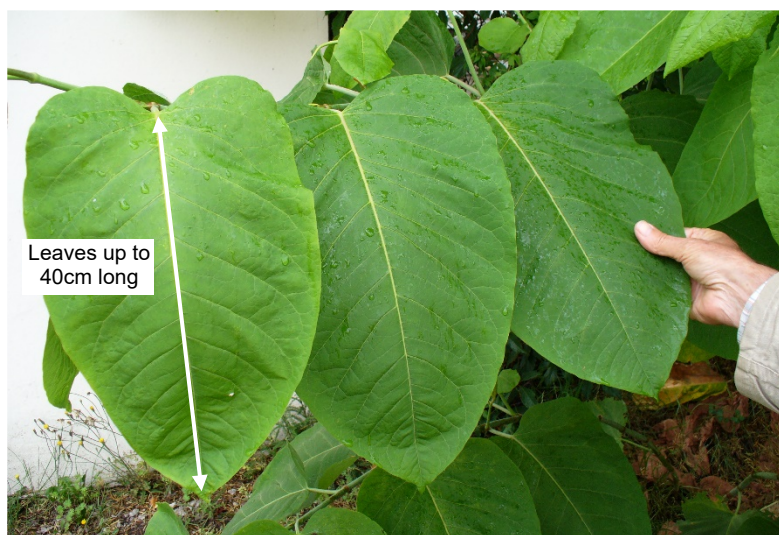
Underside of
leaf is scattered
with long wavy
white hairs

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

Leaf stalk
1-4cm



Leaves up to
40cm long

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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

New growth forms from pink-red buds at the crown. Small red shoots, turn green (asparagus-like) and become more like bamboo. Tall and lush green in summer. Yellow leaves in the autumn and begins to die back leaving brown brittle stems in the winter.

Similar Species

Japanese knotweed

Invasive non-native
(*Fallopia japonica*)



Leaves much smaller (10-15cm long)

Shield shaped leaf, with flat base

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Flowers clustered in loose spikes at base of upper leaves



Underside of leaf has no hairs

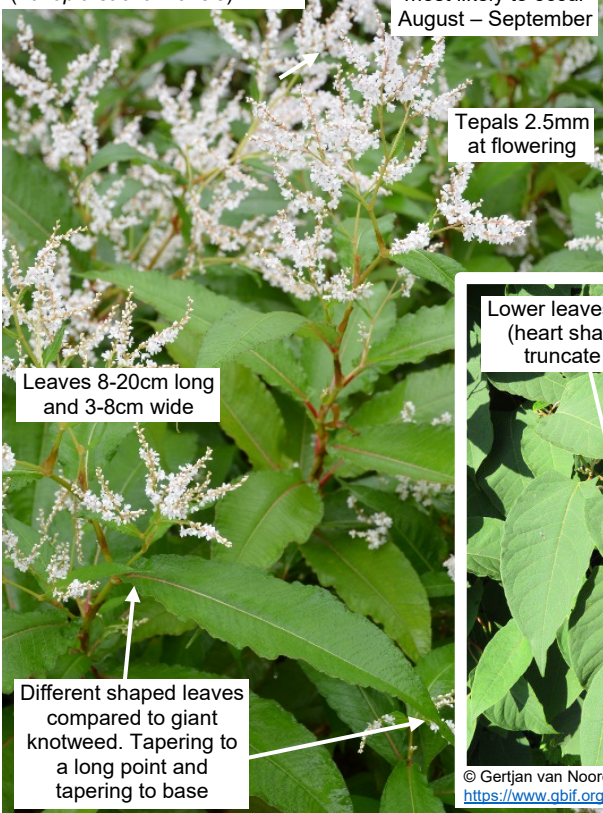
Zig-zag growth

Smaller than giant knotweed (2m in height)

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Himalayan knotweed

Invasive non-native
(*Fallopia sachalinensis*)



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

Tepals 2.5mm at flowering

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

Different shaped leaves compared to giant knotweed. Tapering to a long point and tapering to base

Lower leaves cordate (heart shaped) to truncate base

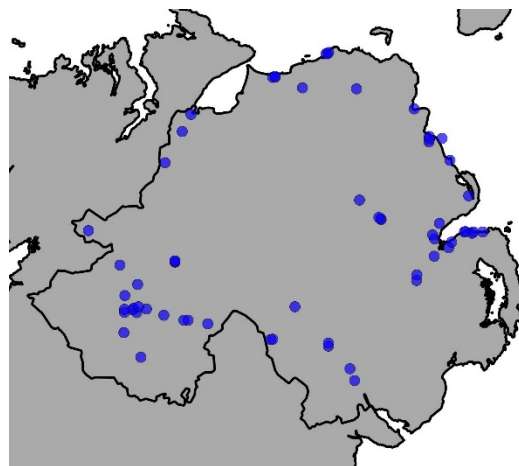
Red veins

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<https://www.gbif.org/occurrence/1952521362>

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Distribution

Widespread across Northern Ireland



Source: NBN atlas Northern Ireland - <https://northernireland-species.nbnatlas.org/search?q=fallopia+sachalinensis>
Check website for current distribution

Hybrid Japanese knotweed

Invasive non-native
(*Fallopia bohemica*)



Usually grows 2.5m in height

Flowers are greenish white

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Oblong shield-shaped leaf, with cordate (heart shaped) base

Leaves 20-25cm long



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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>