

July 10, 2024



Dear Fellow Cottage Owners of Oquaga Lake,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to alert you to the presence of Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*), an invasive species that is becoming increasingly prevalent in our area. Over the July 4th week, I noticed numerous pieces of this plant floating in the lake and observed several areas around the lake where Japanese knotweed has established itself. This letter aims to inform you about the dangers of this plant and encourage proactive measures to prevent its spread on our properties.

Japanese knotweed is a highly aggressive perennial plant known for its rapid growth and resilience. It can grow up to 15 feet tall and forms dense thickets that create a monoculture, outcompeting native plants such as Laurel and Rhododendron. Although it can grow anywhere this plant thrives in moist environments, particularly along the shorelines of rivers, streams, and lakes. It is listed by the World Conservation Union as one of the world's worst invasive species due to its destructive impact on ecosystems.

The spread of Japanese knotweed in our area is alarming. The nearby Delaware River has miles of its banks lined with this invasive species. On the southwest corner of Oquaga Lake Road, acres of Japanese knotweed are growing on the opposite side of the road from the old Scott's property. Additionally, a cottage on the lake has at least 40 yards of knotweed lining its driveway. Another area where it is clearly visible is at the base of Oquaga Lake road where it intersects with Old Route 17 near Exit 82 of Route 17.

The best way to deal with Japanese knotweed is to prevent it from getting established in the first place. Once it takes root, it is incredibly difficult to eradicate. This plant spreads through both its seeds and its extensive rhizome system, which can grow up to 23 feet horizontally and 10 feet deep. This aspect mimics the spread of the unrelated species of bamboo. Even small fragments of the root or stem can grow into new plants, making physical removal challenging and often ineffective. Seeds from this plant, or pieces of its stem or root, if washed up on a shoreline can lead to the propagation of new plants.

Japanese knotweed is problematic for several reasons:

- Environmental Impact: It displaces native flora, reducing biodiversity and altering habitats for wildlife. Its dense growth can also lead to increased erosion along water bodies.
- Structural Damage: The rhizomes can grow through concrete and asphalt, damaging foundations, walls, and roads.
- Economic Costs: Managing and removing Japanese knotweed is expensive, often requiring repeated treatments over several years.

Chemical treatments can be used, but they require repeated applications over several years to ensure complete eradication. Moreover, the use of herbicides near water bodies poses environmental risks. Mechanical removal methods, such as cutting and digging, often lead to further spread if not meticulously managed.

I urge all cottage owners to familiarize themselves with the appearance of Japanese knotweed and to take immediate action if you see it on your property. Early detection and swift removal are crucial. By working together, we can help protect the natural beauty and ecological balance of Oquaga Lake. Further information can be obtained through the New York Invasive Species Information Website at https://nyis/invasive_species/japanese-knotweed or other sites such as Wikipedia.

Sincerely,

Robert Lindberg
Axtell Cottage