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## Japanese Knotweed

*Polygonum cuspidatum*

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### **Identification:**

Japanese knotweed is an herbaceous perennial that resembles a shrub in form and can grow to 10 feet tall. Leaves are simple, alternately arranged, and broadly oval to somewhat triangular. The leaves vary in size according to conditions, but average about six inches at midrib. Tiny, greenish-white flowers occur in attractive branched sprays in summer. They are soon followed by tiny winged fruits. In fall, stems turn a showy red color.

**Origin:** Eastern Asia

### **Habitat:**

Grows well in a variety of conditions, as long as water is available. It tolerates shade and grows well in low areas and in riparian areas along streams and rivers.

### **Ecological Threat:**

Very fast growth, forms dense stands in moist to wet areas where native plants are quickly shaded or crowded out. Once planted as an ornamental, knotweed is now invading riparian areas all over the country. It has a very shallow root system, and provides very little protection from erosion on stream banks. Once established, it is very hard to eradicate or control.

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### **Native alternatives:**

Sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*)

Silky dogwood (*Cornus amomum*), pictured below

Goatsbeard (*Aruncus dioicus*), but be sure to get the North American variety!



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Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition  
90 Tennessee Street, Ste. D  
P.O. Box 889  
Murphy, NC 28906  
828-837-5414  
[www.hrwc.net](http://www.hrwc.net)