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As the growing season approaches for invasive, non-native plants such as Japanese knotweed, it is essential that treatment programmes are factored into your plans. But, as knotweed contamination has become more widely recognised as a major problem, one consequence has been that everyone suddenly has a view on how it should best be treated!

So, how do you choose a reputable and reliable specialist? **Japanese Knotweed Control** offers some advice. Check a company's industry accreditations and legislative compliance. Contractors should be Amenity Assured and BACCS registered – this means they have the minimum requirements to work and preferably hold ISO 9001 accreditation.

The Amenity Assured scheme involves three independent audits being carried out annually on a contractor, including an unannounced on-site assessment, a full audit of a contractor's premises, records and certification, and an end-of-season check with clients to ensure treatments have been successfully completed to their satisfaction.

Is credible warranty-backed insurance cover offered on the work? Many treatment companies have diversified into treating Japanese knotweed from their traditional landscaping and weed control practices but are still operating with the same standard insurance cover as before. This specialist work does, however, require a bespoke insurance policy.

With knotweed treatment often involving the use of heavy machinery and commercial herbicides, up-to-date health and safety compliance is also essential. SAFECContractor accreditation, for example, can be another good indicator of a professional company.

- There's growing evidence that stem injection is now at the forefront of invasive weed management, and the increasingly preferred method on contracts involving Japanese knotweed and other invasive plant species including Giant Hogweed and Rhododendron. According to Stem Injection Systems, stem injection's performance in Belgium and surrounding countries, and it tested different chemical herbicides, application methods and mechanical treatment.

Stem volume, height and density reduction were all assessed over one or two years and the tests concluded that stem injection using glyphosate-based herbicide was the most effective, achieving a stem volume reduction of 99% within two years of the original treatment.