



The good news is that it can be effectively managed in a controlled manner and without prohibitive cost, providing there is early identification and protection of the site, and the work is carried out by a competent and professional treatment specialist.

But therein lies one of the main problems. As knotweed contamination has become more widely recognised, one unfortunate consequence has been that everyone suddenly has a view on how best it should be treated. How can you choose a reputable and reliable specialist when the marketplace is awash with hundreds of so-called industry 'experts', including a great many that are untrained, under-qualified and simply not up to the job?

There are, of course, a number of recognised treatment methods for Japanese Knotweed, as well as other non-native invasive species such as Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam, all of which have their respective merits

depending on the scale and location of the infection.

Physical removal could include excavation and removal from site, known as 'dig and dump', or it could be screening the soil to remove the knotweed rhizome, thus reducing the volume of material taken off site. Chemical treatment could involve a foliar spray programme over a number of years, or the more successful stem injection, which involves delivery of a measured dose of herbicide into the centre of the plant rather than just the surface. This is an increasingly popular method because it targets only the plants injected and there is no environmental risk, spray drift, run-off, or contamination of watercourses and other sensitive vegetation.

In choosing a treatment specialist, the golden rule is to thoroughly check a company's industry accreditations and legislative compliance before appointing them to start the work. The critical consideration for anyone



looking for a contractor should be that they are Amenity Assured and BACCS registered, which means they have the minimum requirement to work, and preferably hold ISO9001 accreditation from the British Standards Institute (preferably UKAS approved).

The Amenity Assured scheme, first launched six years ago, has been developed by several key trade bodies which have the responsibility to address the concerns of government, local authorities and many other amenity organisations with regard to amenity weed control.

The scheme involves three totally independent and separate audits being carried out annually on each 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.

Insurance Backed

Another minimal requirement should be some credible warranty backed insurance cover on all work undertaken.

Inadequate insurance cover continues to undermine many treatment programmes with some guarantees at best misleading and at worst not worth the paper they are written on.

Many companies have simply 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 that addresses the very specific risks of knotweed within the commercial sector and avoids any serious liabilities if a treatment programme goes wrong.

To summarise, always check a company has compliance to the very latest technical environmental health and safety standards and has a current dated Amenity Assured certificate to show standards have been maintained. For added assurance, always be prepared to ask your treatment specialist for references and testimonials from satisfied construction industry customers.

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