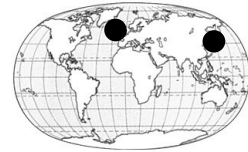


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BIOLOGICAL CONTROL OF FALLOPIA JAPONICA (HOULT.) RONSE DECRAENE: PROJECT UPDATE AND PROGRESS SO FAR

First introduced to Europe and North America from its native Japan as an ornamental and fodder plant in the 19th Century, Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) subsequently escaped from gardens to become one of the most persistent and aggressive weeds in its non-native range. Today, it is distributed throughout mainland Europe, the USA, Canada, New Zealand and parts of Australia and is responsible for widespread environmental and economic damage. In the UK, *Fallopia japonica* is classed as controlled waste under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and is one of only two weeds restricted under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Currently, the most common way to treat Japanese knotweed is through repeated applications of costly chemical herbicides and a recent government review has estimated the cost of nationwide control at £1.56 billion. Believed to be clonal, Japanese knotweed is deemed to be a particularly susceptible target for classical biological control, an approach which offers the only long-term, cost effective and sustainable solution to the problem. After 13 years in development, this pioneering project for the UK began in earnest in 2003, thanks to a consortium of stakeholders. In this paper, we present a profile of the weed and its impacts, report on molecular characterization pointing to its original source and detail the findings of extensive Japanese field surveys. We also introduce the natural enemies studied so far in quarantine, highlighting those still under consideration, whilst underlining prospects for the future.

keywords: *Fallopia japonica*, weed biological control