

# Why you could get an Asbo for not looking after your knotweed

Fail to control the plant on your land and you could end up with an antisocial behaviour order.

Financial Times, October 29, 2016

by: [Alexandra Cooke](#) and [Laura Conduit](#)

**I have a large garden, which is getting rather overgrown because my job is demanding. My neighbour, a keen gardener, has threatened to report me to the council if I don't get rid of some Japanese knotweed, which I happen to think is quite attractive. Why are they so upset?**

Japanese knotweed is an invasive species brought to Europe from Japan in the mid 19th century by a German-born botanist who found it growing on the side of volcanoes. While you might think it looks attractive, it is highly destructive. In its native volcanic landscape, it is kept under control by the climate and regular ash deposits. But in Britain, left to its own devices, knotweed can grow up to 20cm a day and can even grow through concrete.

**So it grows fast. That doesn't sound worthy of council intervention?**

Japanese knotweed can swamp and kill other plants. Left unchecked, it can devalue homes by growing through floors and destroying foundations. The plant is so destructive that it can make selling your home impossible, and can cost upwards of £20,000 to treat.

**Well, what are the council going to do about it?**

As the plant is so destructive (in 2010 it was estimated to have cost the UK economy £166m a year in treatments and home devaluations) the government has taken action to tackle the problem in residential areas. People who fail to control their knotweed can be issued with a notice under antisocial behaviour orders (Asbos) and penalties can range from an on-the-spot fine of £100, to prosecution and a fine of up to £2,500.

**They're going to give me an Asbo?!  
I guess I should just cut it?**

Unfortunately, it's not that simple. Knotweed spreads very easily, and its roots grow very deep, making effective removal tricky. On top of this, knotweed is classed as a "controlled waste" and if it is not disposed of correctly, you could face prosecution. You should seek professional advice to tackle the problem. In the meantime, you could always try some knotweed recipes, I hear it makes a nice crumble.