



## Southeast Exotic Pest Plant Council Invasive Plant Manual

**Common Name:** Japanese Spiraea

**Scientific Name:** *Spiraea japonica* L.

Japanese spiraea is one of more than eighty species of spiraea found in the temperate region of the northern hemisphere. Most of the species have been introduced into cultivation and are popular garden shrubs planted for their decorative flowers. It belongs to the Rosaceae (Rose) family.

**Height:** Japanese spiraea is a small shrub with slender erect stems to 2 m (6.5 ft) tall.

**Stem:** Brown to reddish-brown stems are round and glabrous to densely pubescent on branchlets. Buds are very small, rounded to triangular and somewhat flattened.

**Leaves:** The leaves are alternate, lanceolate to lance-ovate, simply or doubly serrate, acute at base, 8-12 cm (3.0-4.5 in) long, 3-4 cm (1.2-1.6 in) wide, and glabrous.

**Flowers:** Inflorescence is a compound corymb with wide spreading branches. Flowers are pale to deep pink, 5 mm (0.2 in) wide, with stamens much longer than the 2-3 mm (0.07-0.11 in) petals. Blooms June-July.

**Fruit:** The 2.2-2.4 mm (0.09-0.1 in) long seeds are borne in a glabrous, smooth, and lustrous capsule. Blooms July-August.



### Life History

Japanese spiraea is a perennial deciduous shrub. It is adapted to disturbed areas and commonly found along streams and rivers. Each plant produces hundreds of small seeds that are naturally dispersed by water and deposited along stream banks where arboreal competition is limited. Seeds distributed with fill dirt establish new populations that may expand rapidly in the highly disturbed soil of construction sites.

### Origin and Distribution

Japanese spiraea is native to Japan and was first cultivated in 1870. Introduced as an ornamental landscape plant, spiraea spread from the northeast U.S. and is naturalized in much of the southeast and Midwest, including Tennessee.

### Similar Species

There are two native species of spiraea that are similar to Japanese spiraea: *S. virginiana* (Britt.) and *S. betulifolia* (Pallas). Both of these species are rare in Tennessee; *S. virginiana* is listed as a threatened species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Japanese spiraea is distinguished by dense pubescence on the branchlets and inflorescence, lanceolate leaves, and pink flowers.

### Habitat

Spiraea will tolerate a wide range of edaphic conditions. It grows well in full sun but may endure partial shade. Ideal habitats include riparian areas, successional fields, roadsides, power line rights of way, and forest edges. Once established, spiraea grows rapidly forming dense stands that may invade canopy gaps and defoliated areas of adjacent woodlands.

### Management Recommendations

#### Mechanical Controls

**Mowing/Cutting:** This method is appropriate for small initial populations or environmentally sensitive areas where herbicides cannot be used. Repeated mowing or cutting will control the spread of spiraea, but it may not eradicate it. Stems should be cut at least once per growing season prior to seed production and as close to ground level as possible.

#### Herbicidal Controls

**Foliar Spray Method:** This method should be considered for large thickets of Japanese spiraea where risk to non-target species is minimal. Air temperature should be above 65°F to ensure absorption of herbicides.

**Glyphosate:** Apply a 2% solution of glyphosate and water plus a 0.5% non-ionic surfactant to thoroughly wet all leaves. Use a low pressure and coarse spray pattern to reduce spray-drift damage to non-target species. Glyphosate is a non-selective systemic herbicide that may kill partially-sprayed non-target plants.

**Triclopyr:** Apply a 2% solution of triclopyr and water plus a 0.5% non-ionic surfactant to thoroughly wet all leaves. Use a low pressure and coarse spray pattern to reduce spray-drift damage to non-target species. Triclopyr is a selective herbicide for broadleaf species. In areas where desirable grasses are growing under or around spiraea, triclopyr can be used without non-target damage.

**Cut Stump Method:** This control method should be considered when treating individual bushes or where the presence of desirable species preclude foliar application. This treatment is effective as long as the ground is not frozen.

**Glyphosate:** Horizontally cut spiraea stems at or near ground level. Immediately apply a 25% solution of glyphosate and water to the cut stump making sure to cover the entire surface.

**Triclopyr:** Horizontally cut spiraea stems at or near ground level. Immediately apply a 25% solution of triclopyr and water to the cut stump making sure the entire surface is covered.

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Last updated on Wednesday, November 05, 2003 at 01:20 PM  
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