Amsterdam, april 2023

Japanese Duizendknoop Festival

Mediamatic

Gezond, sterk,
gezellig, muzikaal, lekker
enzaam & geveer enst.
met ons de...
My exotic neighborhood

An echo from the Flemish field.

Sus Willems
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To frame for a moment

• People have always distributed species.

• In the past, ecosystems were given time to adapt; in recent centuries, species have been moving too fast, putting ecosystems under pressure with disappearing of species as a result.

• Not all ecosystems are equally sensitive. Small islands are especially vulnerable. Because of their history and location, our lowlands are relatively resistant to current and future invasions.

• We must remain objective; damage to infrastructure or nature are not unique characteristics of exotics. Native species can also cause damage, as the badgers demonstrated recently in railway embankments.

• We should not give species characteristics they do not have; Invasive knotweed cannot pierce concrete or hard structures! They can, however, force open structures such as masonry, just as our native trees do.
The management of the invasive Black Cherry*; what can we learn from it?

• For more than fifty years many resources have been invested in controlling Black cherry.

• However, this exotic species was primarily a management problem, not an ecological problem.

• Co-evolution has ensured, however, that this exotic species is certainly no longer invasive in Flanders.

* (Prunus serotina)
Japanese knotweed: some facts

- This invasive species will never go away.
- He can be troublesome, but damage is often greatly exaggerated.
- Doing nothing is a perfect management option for many vegetations. Co-evolution will occur in these vegetations.
- A lack of understanding of the ecology is causing many control actions to backfire.
- There are already native species that can compete with knotweed.
Knotweed can be integrated into our environment; Flanders, Olen, Bankloop

- Selective pruning keeps knotweed under control and allows native species to develop. Here, a reed vegetation form a buffer against knotweed.
- [link Bankloop](#)
Another native species that can compete with knotweed is hops (*Humulus lupulus*).
An ecological sarcophagus of hops (Kasterlee)

Selective pruning favors hops, and also encapsulates Knotweed

link Kasterlee parking
Old man’s beard (*Clematis vitalba*) and wild vine (*Parthenocissus*) can also encapsulate knotweed.
And that gives beautiful vegetations.

Link, Lier, Leuvensevest
Suggestions for green managers and contractors

- Maximum prevention; bio sanitary measures in construction works.
- In case of new infections, act quickly.
- Control of existing vegetations.
- Custom combat; there is no silver bullet!
  - [link bouwproject te Geel](#)
Urgent call!

• Install natural reserves of invasive exotics, to study their ecology, and to give co-evolution maximum chance.
For example; Soldatenbos te Kessel (Flanders), A black cherry natural reserve?
Here, native pathogens have a chance to crack the immunity code of black cherry.
Native pathogens also try to break knotweed's immunity code, can we speed up this process?
As we say in Flanders

“Nature management is a matter of knowledge, communication, opportunity, discipline and ... patience!”
Voor Mediamatic

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