

LET'S KEEP IT CLEAR

a short guide to looking after your local watercourse





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Fly tipping

Well-maintained watercourses, rivers, streams and ditches play a vital role in both flood prevention and the provision of important wildlife habitat. Here are a few simple ways you can help to keep them clear.

Fly tipping

Despite the availability of household waste collection and local recycling centres, fly tipping continues to be a major issue, affecting watercourses across north Kent.

- If you see fly tipping in progress, then phone Kent Police on **999**, providing details of the location, vehicle registration and description of the offender.
- Small amounts of existing fly tipped waste should be reported to your local council.
- Large amounts of existing fly tipped waste, should be reported to the Environment Agency on **0800 807060**.

Garden waste

Legally classed as fly tipping, garden waste is often a common cause of blockages in watercourses, as it is often slow to biodegrade (especially woody material, which can take years). It can also smother natural habitats and help spread invasive plant species.

- Take garden waste to your local recycling centre or take advantage of one of the many collection schemes run by local councils. Search for recycling at **www.kent.gov.uk** or **www.medway.gov.uk**
- Where possible, avoid composting garden waste adjacent to watercourses.



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Garden waste



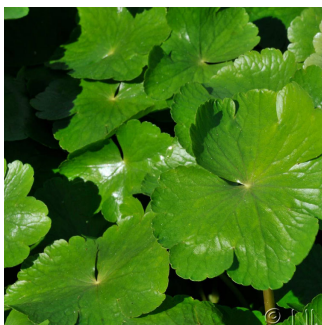
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Japanese knotweed



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Himalayan balsam



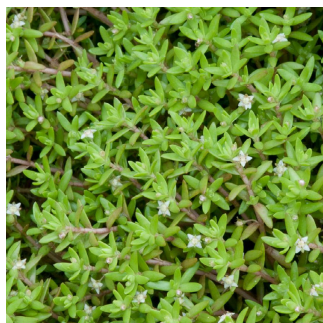
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Floating pennywort



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Water fern



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New Zealand pigmyweed



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Pendulous sedge



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Bamboo



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Rhododendron

Invasive non-native plant species

Amongst the many non-native plant species to be found in the UK, several are likely to cause issues on watercourses and should be avoided. Some of the key plants found across north Kent include: Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam, New Zealand pigmyweed, water fern and floating pennywort. If you come across any of these species, contact your local action group for further advice. Visit **www.nonnativespecies.org** for details.

- Further detailed images of the above can be found at **www.nonnativespecies.org/gallery**
- Download the free PlantTracker app to your phone at **<http://plantracker.naturelocator.org>**
- *Be Plant Wise*, a guide to non-native aquatic plants, can be found at **www.nonnativespecies.org/beplantwise**

Aside from the above species, ornamental plants and trees such as pendulous sedge, bamboo and rhododendron can also cause issues requiring control.

Planning and structures

Avoid encroaching onto the watercourse with garden extensions, paths or other structures such as culverts, as this can have a significant impact on both its health and ability to flow freely, which can lead to an increased flooding risk.

Where such work is unavoidable, you must obtain consent from KCC's Flood and Water Management Team. Phone **03000 414141** or email **flood@kent.gov.uk**

Medway residents should phone **01634 333333** or email

floodrisk@medway.gov.uk

Work in, over or under a main river, or within EA byelaw margins, requires Environment Agency consent.

Visit **www.gov.uk/flood-defence-consent-england-wales** for details.

Riparian ownership

If your property (or land owned by you) is adjacent to a watercourse, then unless it can be proved otherwise, you are a riparian owner and need to be aware of your rights and responsibilities. Failure to carry out these responsibilities could result in legal action.

To find out more, email **msep@medway.gov.uk** for a copy of the Environment Agency's *Living on the edge* booklet or read it online at **www.gov.uk** (search riverside ownership).

Other ways to help

- Fallen trees and branches can increase the risk of flooding and should be reported to your local authority for removal.
- Leave some waterside vegetation/long grass, as this can help slow down the flow of rainwater into the watercourse, provide cover for wildlife and help prevent soil erosion.
- Avoid leaving unsecured garden furniture next to the watercourse.
- Never pour oil, detergents or other waste into the watercourse.
- Feeding bread to ducks can not only adversely affect their health, but uneaten bread can cause algal blooms in the water and attract vermin.
- Join a local conservation group.

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