

Alien invasive species

These are plants or animals which are not native to Britain and can take over natural habitats. Some aliens like to grow in or near ditches or rivers. If you see any of the plants in these pictures, please report them to your local council (contact details inside).



Japanese knotweed
Can also cause damage to buildings.



Himalayan balsam
Probably the species you are most likely to see



ABOVE: *Azolla*. An alga that can choke ditches.
RIGHT: *New Zealand pygmyweed*. This very invasive species is banned from sale in the UK.



Kent Countryside Management Partnerships

DON'T BLOCK THE FLOW!

Garden waste and
other rubbish dumped
in ditches and rivers
can cause flooding



A drainage ditch is one of those things you don't think about much until you need it.

You've received this leaflet because your home is in an area where ditches and rivers are particularly important for draining rainwater. You may have seen small ditches alongside streets, next to footpaths or in parks. You may have one close to or in your garden.

These ditches and small streams are more important than they look. They may have little or no water in them most of the time, but in heavy rainfall they can help to prevent flooding.

Blocking ditches and streams can cause flooding of houses

Recent surveys found that some ditches were blocked by things like fly tipping, garden waste and other debris.

We also found a problem with littering and dumping of rubbish in or close to rivers. Rivers are natural habitats that are being spoilt in this way.

DON'T BLOCK THE FLOW!

Fly tipping

We all know that dumping rubbish in the countryside is illegal, but the same applies in towns. Ditches and urban rivers may be out of sight and seem neglected but they are not suitable places to dispose of waste.

Disposing of your refuse responsibly is easy. You can get rid of all household waste at local recycling centres. They are free to use – see foot of page.

Your local council will collect larger items (there are charges but you may not have to pay if you are receiving certain benefits). See contact details, below right.

Fly tipping is a criminal offence and should be reported:

If you see fly tipping in progress you can call Kent Police on 999.

Otherwise phone your local council to report small amounts or for larger amounts call the Environment Agency on 0800 80 70 60

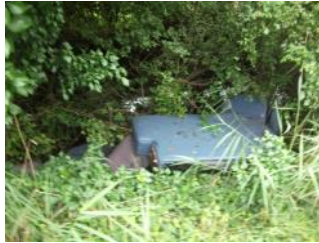
Garden waste

We have found that garden waste is a common cause of blockages in the ditches and rivers we surveyed.

Garden waste may seem harmless. It is usually biodegradable and people may think that getting rid of it in a park or on a riverbank is not as bad as dumping other waste. But legally this is still classed as fly tipping and is against the law. It can be unsightly, smother wild plants, harbour vermin or lead to garden plants taking over natural habitats. Dumped in a ditch it can cause flooding in people's homes.

It is just as important to be responsible with garden waste as any other refuse. All garden waste can be disposed for free at local recycling centres (see below).

Local councils have garden waste collection services. You will get a wheelie bin which will be emptied fortnightly (there may be a charge to rent the bin). Use the local council numbers on the next page to ask for this service. Or why not compost your garden waste? Local councils can supply compost bins.



Dams

Building dams on streams is part of outdoor play, but in urban areas, damming even the smallest ditch could cause flooding of houses if there is heavy rain.

If your children or teenagers go out and about unsupervised, please discourage them from blocking up ditches with debris – apart from the flood risk, this could be dangerous.

We found that many of the dams were built from garden waste or other materials that someone else had dumped, so even if you think you are putting waste out of harm's way, it may end up causing a flood.



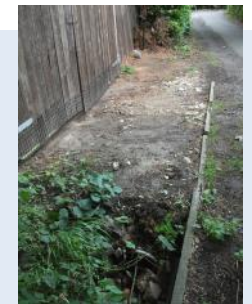
Ditches and rivers on or close to your property

If you have a ditch or river running through your garden you probably own the section that passes through your property. If you have a ditch or river running alongside your garden, you probably have shared ownership of that watercourse with your neighbour (but check your property deeds to be sure)

As the owner or shared owner, you have certain legal responsibilities, including:

- ◆ Maintaining the ditch/river and banks, keep banks clear.
- ◆ Maintaining trees and shrubs growing on banks.
- ◆ Controlling alien invasive species (see back page).
- ◆ Letting water flow freely, not obstructing or diverting it (but you are allowed to protect your property from flood if you get permission for works from your local council).
- ◆ Leaving an open strip next to the bank to allow maintenance and inspection.
- ◆ Not polluting the water, or dumping rubbish, including garden waste, in the ditch/river or on its banks.
- ◆ Not damaging wildlife habitats or heritage sites.

Please maintain your fences and walls to avoid obstructions, and don't encroach on ditches with garden extensions, or paths. Please don't cover over or culvert the ditch or put any structure in it without permission from your local council.



Ditch covered over to create rear access to property - this would require permission.

**Find your nearest recycling centre at www.kent.gov.uk
- search 'find your nearest tip'.**

**To find out which local council area you live in, go to:
www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council**