

Common Reed (*Phragmites*) Fact Sheet

Phragmites australis

Poaceae Family



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Distinguishing Features:

- ❶ **Flowers:** The flower heads are dense, fluffy, gray or purple in color and 6-15 inches long.
- ❷ **Seeds:** The seeds are brown, light weight, and about 0.3 inches long. In the fall the plant turns brown, and the inflorescences persist throughout the winter.
- ❸ **Leaves:** Broad, pointed leaves arise from thick, vertical stalks. Leaves are 6-24 inches long, 0.5 - 2 inches wide, flat and glabrous
- ❹ **Flowering Time:** Flowering occurs from July to October.
- ❺ **Life cycle:** A tall perennial grass that can grow to 15 ft. in height.

Impacts:

- *Phragmites* is usually found in dense thickets growing in or near shallow water.
- Plants invade ditches, lakes, ponds, wetlands, and riparian areas, and displace native plants, alter hydrology and block sunlight to the aquatic community.
- *Phragmites* is native to Eurasia and Africa. Native populations do occur in the United States and they are sometimes very difficult to distinguish from the exotics.

Control:

- Cutting, burning, application of herbicides (in particular Rodeo), or water management schemes are possible control measures. The measure(s) used will depend on a number of factors including the size and location.
- For small infestations, cutting has been used successfully to control *Phragmites*. Since it is a grass, cutting several times during a season, at the wrong times, may increase stand density. However, if cut just before the end of July, most of the food reserves produced that season are removed with the aerial portion of the plant, reducing the plant's vigor. This regime may eliminate a colony if carried out annually for several years.
- Biological control does not appear to be an option at this time.



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