



Phragmites/Common Reed

Phragmites australis subsp. australis



Photo: Arthur Haines

What's the problem

This aggressive plant invades wetland and shoreline habitat and forms dense monocultures that spread rapidly through rhizomes (underground stems). Native to Europe and Asia.

CHARACTERISTICS

Life cycle	Persists annually, begins producing new growth in spring, persists late into the summer. Come winter, dead stems will dry and remain standing.
Height	Tall reed with a height of 3–5m (12–15ft), but in NB has been observed at smaller heights around 2–4m (6–12ft).
Leaves	Long lance shaped blue/green leaves with smooth, sharp edges. Adheres tightly to the stem as a sheath.
Flowers	Large and fan-like with many branches. Appears purplish when freshly bloomed and light tan and fluffy later in the growing season.
Stem	Solid green colour, hollow and very sturdy. Rough to the touch with a dull appearance.
Bloom Time	Flowers from early July- to late September, dead flowerheads remain.
Habitat	Common in roadside ditches, wetlands, and other wet environments.

Key ID Features

- Very tall (>2m) compared to native grasses, with a large “fluffy” flowerhead
- Dead stems and flowerheads will persist through the winter, stems very rigid
- Forms dense monocultures, no native vegetation growing in stand



Dead stems and flowerheads persist through winter



Very tall grass (typically >2m)

Common Look-a-Likes



Native Phragmites (*Phragmites Australis* *subsp. americanus*):

- Grows more sparsely than invasive phragmites, will have other species intermixed
- Flowerheads are less dense and full, can see individual branches



Photo:
Richard Old

Reed Canary Grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*):

- Much smaller than Phragmites (60–120 cm), with less leaves and a more pronounced stem
- **Long, slender** flowerheads that are dense and unbranched



Photo:
Wikipedia

Brome Grasses (*Bromus spp.*):

- Much smaller than Phragmites (60–120 cm), with similar shaped flowerheads
- Stems are not rigid or tough, and break easily