

Common Reed

Phragmites australis



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Invasive Plants are a Threat to:

- Forests and wetlands
- Native plants
- Perennial gardens
- Wildlife
- Lakes and rivers
- Human Health
- Farmland

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Description:

Common reed is a tall, warm-season, perennial grass. The stems are erect, rigid, smooth, hollow and can grow up to six meters in height. The leaves are stiff, lanceolate and 20-40 cm long and 1-4 cm wide. Flowers occur between July and October and are arranged in tawny spikelets with tufts of silky hair. The silky hairs are purplish at first and become tawny to dark brown at maturity. The seeds are thin, brown and delicate with a long, narrow bristle. While there is a native subspecies of common reed, *Phragmites australis ssp. americanus*, it is not invasive and can be distinguished from the introduced common reed by several leaf, stem and flower characteristics. For more information, see references on back.

Distribution:

Common reed is especially common in alkaline and brackish environments, and can also thrive in highly acidic wetlands. It is common along railroad tracks, roadside ditches, piles of dredge soil and wherever even slight depressions hold water. In Indiana, it is common in wetlands in the north and in the brackish water of oil/gas production areas in the southwest.

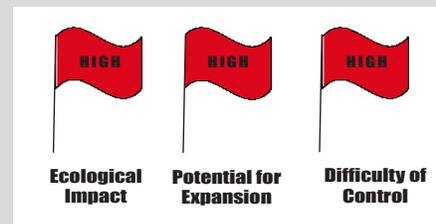
Problem:

Common reed is typically the dominant species in the areas that it occupies. It is capable of vigorous reproduction and often forms dense, monospecific stands. The rhizomes and roots form dense mats that discourage competitors from becoming established. These monotypic stands alter the wetlands that they colonize, eliminating habitat for native plant and animal species including waterfowl.

Origin:

Common reed is widely distributed, ranging all over Europe, Asia, Africa, America and Australia. Recent work by Saltonstall et al 2004 recognizes a native subspecies of common reed distinct from the introduced, invasive lineage. The native subspecies has been identified at several sites in northern Indiana. Due to habitat destruction and being out competed by the European common reed, these native populations are under threat.

IPSAWG Ranking:



IPSAWG Recommendation:

- Do not buy, sell or plant phragmites in Indiana.
- Help by eradicating phragmites on your property.

This ranking illustrates the results of an assessment conducted by the **Invasive Plant Species Assessment Working Group (IPSAWG)**, which is made up of many organizations and agencies concerned about invasive plant species. IPSAWG's goal is to assess which plant species may threaten natural areas in Indiana and develop recommendations to reduce their use in the state.

For more information about IPSAWG and the assessment tool used to rank invasive species, visit their website:

www.invasivespecies.IN.gov

ALTERNATIVES to common reed:



Prairie cord grass
(*Spartina pectinata*)



Blue joint grass
(*Calamagrostis canadensis*)



Tussock sedge
(*Carex stricta*)



Switch grass
(*Panicum virgatum*)

Pictures By (Top to Bottom): J. Anderson, www.nps.gov, G. Fewless and T. Bodner @ USDA - NRCS Plants Database.

Control Methods:

Before any control work, be sure that the common reed is the invasive non-native species rather than the native subspecies. Prescribed burning can be used but it does not reduce the growing ability unless root burn occurs. However, it does remove accumulated leaf litter, giving the seeds of other species space to

germinate. It can also be a dangerous option because of the potential for spot fires. Cutting can also be a successful control when done at the correct time. Colonies may be eliminated by annually cutting before the end of July. If cut at the wrong time, stand density may increase. Glyphosate is commonly

used for common reed control. It is not selective and will kill grasses and broadleaf plants alike. Application of glyphosate must take place after the tasseling stage when the plant is supplying nutrients to the rhizome. **Always read and follow pesticide label directions.**

Eight Easy Ways to Combat Invasive Plants

You can **help stop** the spread of **invasive plants** by following these **8 easy guidelines**:

1. Ask for only non-invasive species when you acquire plants. Request that nurseries and garden centers sell only non-invasive plants.
2. Seek information on invasive plants. Sources include botanical gardens, horticulturists, conservationists, and government agencies.
3. Scout your property for invasive species, and remove invasives before they become a problem. If plants can't be removed, at least prevent them from going to seed.
4. Clean your boots before and after visiting a natural area to prevent the spread of invasive plant seeds.
5. Don't release aquarium plants into the wild.
6. Volunteer at local parks and natural areas to assist ongoing efforts to diminish the threat of invasive plants.
7. Help educate your community through personal contacts and in such settings as garden clubs and civic groups.
8. Support public policies and programs to control invasive plants.

For More Information:

On distinguishing native and non-native genotypes of Phragmites:

- RECOGNITION OF PHRAGMITES AUSTRALIS SUBSP. AMERICANUS (POACEAE: ARUNDINOIDEAE) IN NORTH AMERICA: EVIDENCE FROM MORPHOLOGICAL AND GENETIC ANALYSES; Kristin Saltonstall, Paul M. Peterson and Robert J. Soreng; SIDA 21 (2): 683-692. 2004.
- MORPHOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NATIVE AND INTRODUCED GENOTYPES OF PHRAGMITES AUSTRALIS, www.invasiveplants.net/Phragmites/morphology.htm.

On this assessment and IPSAWG:

IPSAWG
www.invasivespecies.IN.gov

On identification and control techniques:

The Nature Conservancy's Wildland Weeds
www.tncweeds.ucdavis.edu

On native plant alternatives and sources:

Indiana Native Plant and Wildflower Society

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