

Backyard Invasive Plants



COMMON REED GRASS (*Phragmites australis*)

Common Reed Grass (*Phragmites australis*) is an aggressive invasive plant. We often see them along highways growing in ditches and ponds. Although considered attractive by many, their beauty is not worth the destruction they cause. Originally from Eurasia, they have spread throughout the U.S. and Canada.

These dense, fast growing stands destroy natural habitats that provide critical food and shelter for animals, birds, and pollinators

(such as monarchs). They alter the natural flow of water through the wetland effecting aquatic organisms. They take over beaches and waterways preventing recreation.

Some property owners like Common Reed Grass for privacy screening or ornamentation. However, many native grasses and plants are a better option for those uses. For information on native grasses and plants, go to ohiodnr.gov/gonative or contact *Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District*. We can all help protect our environment by keeping invasive plants out of our yards and properties and planting natives where we can.

Identification



Common Reed Grass returns every year (a perennial). The hollow, ribbed, 1-inch stems resemble bamboo. The stiff, dark gray-green alternating leaves span up to 2.5 inches wide and 15 inches long, tapering to a point. The feathery “panicles” growing from the top of the stems, start purple and grow to 20-inch tan seed heads by late July.



Management

Phragmites spread by underground roots (rhizomes) and above ground “creepers”. Wind and animals spread the seeds out of the area. Although a difficult plant to eradicate, small stands are controllable. Large stands are best removed by invasive plant experts. It is important to be alert for any suspected phragmites starting to grow on property.

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Removal requires proper timing and care. Incorrect timing of removal can cause the spread of phragmites through soil disturbance. Clean equipment used at the treatment site to prevent the spread of seeds and rhizomes to other areas. Bag all cut material at the site and remove.

- Hand cutting can remove individual plant stems of very small stands. However, hand cutting alone requires repeat cutting as the plant will continue to grow. Best results come from cutting and spraying an approved herbicide.
- Herbicides must be used with caution and label instructions followed. If spraying on plants **in water**, use an aquatic approved glycoside chemical such as aquatic **Rodeo**. If spraying **on land** use **Roundup**. NEVER use roundup near water! Spray on new growing leaves and stems in a small stand. (Protect any nearby plants you want to keep.) Allow to stay on leaves for at least two weeks before cutting back.
- Brush cutters work well for stands too dense for hand cutting. The cutting blade should be set to a height greater than four inches to minimize impacts to small animals, native plants, and soil disturbance. Repeat as needed to prevent the formation of seed heads.
- Mow phragmites when the ground is frozen when possible. This improves native plant growth in the spring and avoids soil disturbance. Do not mow between April 15 and July 15 to avoid spreading phragmites seeds, broken rhizomes, and above ground creepers.

MORE BACKYARD INVASIVES

Garden centers sell many invasive plants to unknowing customers. Others came here years ago for purposes such as soil erosion control or accidentally in overseas shipments. Although they appear to be staying in the yard, the seeds and roots spread through animal, human, and wind movements. There are many invasive plants in the wild, but the ones below are some of the most aggressive.

Garlic Mustard 	Japanese Knotweed 	Purple Loosestrife 	Multiflora Rose 
Honeysuckles 	Autumn Olive 	Buckthorn 	Lesser Celandine 

If you have any of these plants on your property or unwanted plants growing in your pond or wet areas, please contact the *Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District*, 216.524.6580, for removal advice. For identification information go to <http://ohiodnr.gov/invasiveplants>.